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VOLUME 57 NO 604 JULY 2005

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ROAD USER CHARGING NEEDS BUS PAYBACK

Our re-elected transport secretary, Alistair Darling, has displayed political courage by announcing plans to replace fuel duty and vehicle excise duty with a road user charge. He is talking of motorists, and perhaps other road users, paying according to how many miles they drive and when they make their journeys.

Many politicians would rather walk on hot coals — and the odd bed of nails — than take on this thankless challenge. We can sense the words 'poll tax on wheels' forming themselves on the lips of opposition politicians as we write this. But Mr Darling recognises that traffic congestion will get worse unless something is done. If that something isn't to build many more new roads, then maybe it is to ration road use by making people consider the cost of their journeys. Just as they do by public transport.

Don't hold your breath for too long, though. It requires technology that doesn't yet exist in a practical form. We're talking of 10 years from now and no one knows what shade of government will be around by then. Even if it is whatever colour represents New Labour, the transport secretary is unlikely to be called either Alistair or Darling.

And although he is brave in launching a debate, that alone is no reason to believe that Mr Darling, his successor or his successor's successor will possess the same courage in actually implementing the measure.

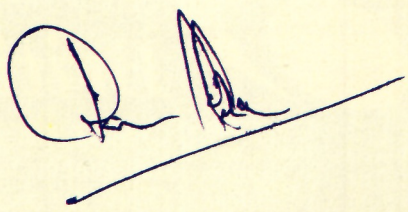
You might also ask what this has to do with buses. The industry has little to gain if the charge is treated merely as an alternative way of extracting the same amount of tax from the economically active and personally mobile. Nor will it do it much good if it's only perceived as an anti-motorist measure. Some of the revenue must be ring-fenced to expand and improve our public transport.

Indeed, public opinion research published in June says as much. Like Alistair Darling, 90% of the respondents told MORI pollsters that although they accept that road congestion is a problem and detest (presumably other) drivers on the school run, they don't want to pay for the solution. They expect the government to provide free or better public transport.

Given land use policies over the past 50 years, it's a tall, even impossible order to expect buses, trams or trains to do everything we can do by car today. Like travelling quickly between low density housing and out-of-town business and retail parks. But the message is clear. Long term, land use should be determined around what public transport can do. Short term, public transport needs to be made better.

And just as London and Stockholm did before they introduced their congestion charges, bus (and other public transport) services must be upgraded in advance, so motorists recognise that an alternative exists. And that demands funding.

It's a message that bus operators, bus users and representatives of business and the private motorist need to put across with vigour as the government considers the case for road user charging. If the message is lost, then — sadly — it will be a poll tax on wheels.



ALAN MILLAR

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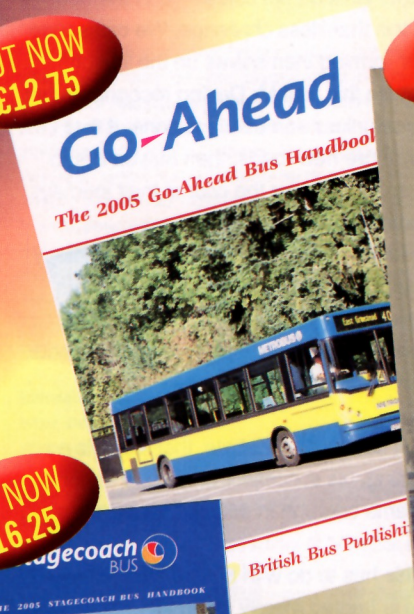

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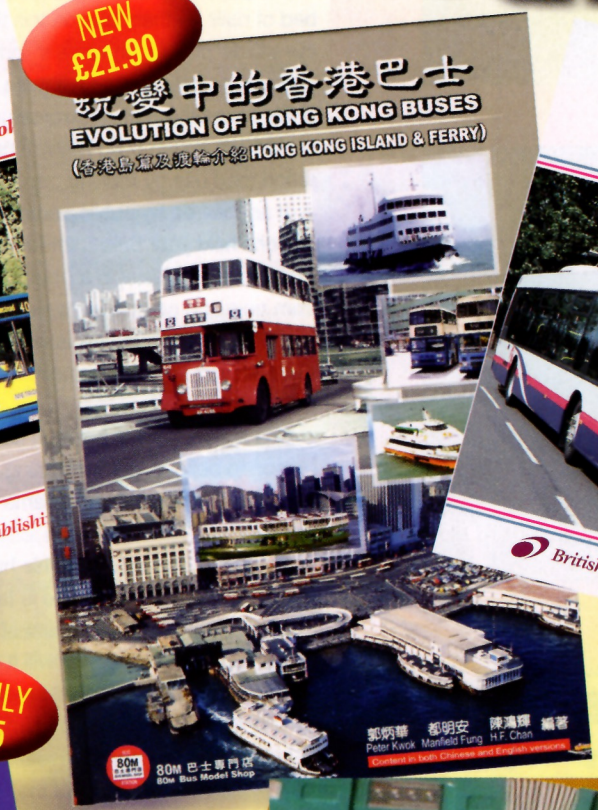
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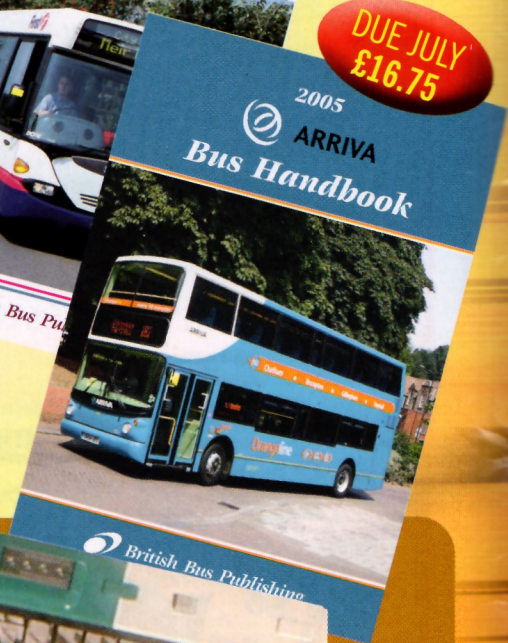

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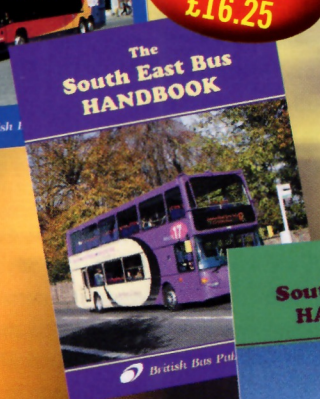

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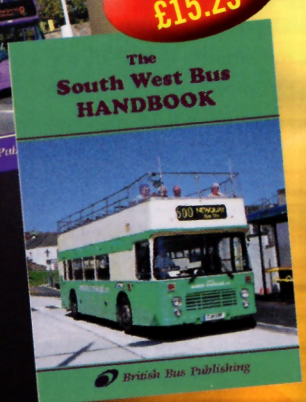

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GO-AHEAD SET FOR SOUTH COAST EXPANSION

Go-Ahead is poised to expand its bus operations along the south coast of England. It has made a £13.8 million friendly takeover bid for Southern Vectis (*Buses* last month) and is negotiating to acquire the Stagecoach operation at Lewes.

The Southern Vectis board has already recommended that shareholders accept the Go-Ahead offer for a business that its then management bought 19 years ago from the National Bus Company for £1.1 million.

Go-Ahead chief executive Chris Moyes says: 'Southern Vectis is a business that we know and have followed for some time. While it has faced some challenges in recent times, we are confident that we can improve Southern Vectis's financial performance through best practice and operational efficiencies. The acquisition will complement our bus division, a significant part of which is already focused on the southern region of England.'

He says there are 'significant opportunities' for operational efficiencies and cost savings at Southern Vectis's core business on the Isle of Wight and in its Solent Blue Line division in Southampton and south Hampshire.

He says the deal would provide 'a stronger operating platform to participate in further opportunities in the southern region'. Go-Ahead is bidding strongly to buy Yellow Buses from Bournemouth Council and amalgamate it with its 300-vehicle Wilts & Dorset subsidiary.

Above: All Southern Vectis double-deckers are lowheight, including Northern Counties Palatine I-bodied Volvo Olympian 751 (M751 HDL) in Route Rouge livery for services connecting with Red Funnel ferries at Cowes. ADRIAN SUCH

Left: Pride of the Southern Vectis fleet is 502 (CDL 899), a 1939 Bristol K5G with open-top ECW body. DARREN FORD

Below: The oldest Stagecoach bus at Lewes is 14138 (A138 MRN), an ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian new to Ribble 21 years ago. MARK LYONS

Southern Vectis would add approximately 145 buses (82 on the Isle of Wight) to Go-Ahead's fleet of 3,000 stretching from Dorset to Tyneside. Additionally, some Southampton area routes are franchised under the Solent Blue Line name, mainly to Marchwood Motorways.

Solent Blue Line, whose operating territory adjoins Wilts & Dorset's, hit trading problems last year and has been restructured under new managing director Phil Stockley, a former Stagecoach man. Like Go-Ahead's Metrobus and Brighton & Hove companies, it has expanded into weekend railway replacement services. Nonetheless, its past performance is expected to contribute to a fall in Southern Vectis profits in the year to 30 April. In 2003/04, it made £812,000 before tax.

However, a property developer bought Newport bus station — hub of its Isle of Wight operations — in April for £5.1 million. Southern Vectis will repay around £1.2 million of the proceeds to the developer for a new bus interchange.

When the Southern Vectis bid was announced on 26 May, it also emerged that Brighton & Hove was negotiating to buy the Lewes-based operations from Stagecoach, which runs them currently as part of its Southdown Motor Services business. If Brighton & Hove concludes a deal, it will take over Stagecoach's workings on services 12 (Brighton-Eastbourne), 28 (Brighton-Ringmer) and 29 (Brighton-Tunbridge Wells), plus some contracts, from September.

Around 70 employees would transfer along with 29 buses — the current allocation is mainly Dennis Tridents and Darts and Volvo B10Ms — based at Lewes and outstations at Seaford, Eastbourne and Uckfield. However, Brighton & Hove, which already operates 250 vehicles from three depots in its home city, won't buy the Eastgate Street, Lewes depot. This will widen further the gap in Stagecoach's south coast territory. Three years ago, it closed its Eastbourne depot and sold four routes to Eastbourne Buses; Lewes then became its only depot between Worthing and Hastings.

W&D DRIVERS AGREE WAGE DEAL

Wilts & Dorset drivers have accepted a 5% pay increase and have lifted a strike threat. Ninety percent of the company's 600 drivers — members of the Rail Maritime & Transport union — took part in a ballot, with 61% voting for the offer.

TGM SELLS LONDON BUSES TO NATIONAL EXPRESS

In a major change of strategy, Tellings-Golden Miller has sold its London and Surrey tendered bus business to the National Express Group, which will merge it into its existing London business under the management of Travel London managing director Paul McGowan.

NatEx expects to complete the deal on 17 June, adding 182 single-deck buses — most of them TransBus or Dennis Darts — and three leased west London and Surrey depots to Travel London's fleet of over 240 operated from three depots in south and south-east London. It is paying £20.4 million cash for the TGM Buses and TGM Middlesex businesses, which last year made a £2.1 million operating profit on £23.9 million turnover — an 8.8% margin. TGM as a whole made a £2.9 million operating profit in 2004 on £38.4 million turnover.

Phil White, NatEx's chief executive, says the group has been looking to increase its market share since it moved back into London in February last year with its acquisition of Connex Bus and its bases in Croydon and Battersea. Before then, it struck a deal with Transport for London to lease the mothballed Walworth garage and won contracts to start running three routes from there from last autumn.

Above: Newest buses in the TGM fleet are six Caetano Nimbus-bodied TransBus Darts delivered last year for route 112, on which 459 (HX04 HTT) was photographed at Ealing Broadway. GEOFF RIXON

The TGM deal takes NatEx into another part of the UK capital. Two of the depot facilities acquired — Fulwell and Hayes — operate 16 TfL routes, while the third — Byfleet — operates most of 15 contracts for Surrey County Council. It comes only four months after TGM bought the 36-vehicle AirLinks airside business at Heathrow back from NatEx and follows the sale, in March, of its isolated 16-vehicle bus operation in Dartford, south-east London to Go-Ahead's Metrobus subsidiary.

When it was first listed on the Alternative Investment Market in August 2003, TGM held 13 TfL contracts. It said it intended to grow by acquiring other bus operators in London and the Home Counties and by bidding to win more TfL contracts. In the event, it only acquired two other London bus operators — Crystals at Dartford (since sold) and Wings at Hayes. It won one additional TfL route — 112 (Ealing-Brent Cross) — which it operates from Hayes, but lost former Green Line route 726 (now X26) to Metrobus on re-tender.

TGM says it pulled out of several deals to buy other London bus operators, as the asking prices for those businesses were higher than it was prepared to pay. Rising employment costs and the influx of larger operators have made it increasingly difficult to win new contracts from its existing bases.

The group, which now needs to relocate its headquarters from Fulwell, is left with almost 300 buses and coaches in four parts of the country — coaches (including the 2005 UK Coach of the Year) in west London; National Express coaches and interurban buses in Portsmouth; Burton's Coaches and Network Colchester in East Anglia; and Classic Coaches in Tyneside.

It hopes to expand all of these and says it is interested in other acquisition opportunities beyond the Home Counties. On 14 May, it increased the daytime frequency of its Southampton-Portsmouth Solent Clipper service to half-hourly and extended it to Southsea, using low-floor Volvo B10BLE buses transferred from London following the end of route 726.

Top left: TGM kept its own livery for buses used on Surrey County Council contracts, such as Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 324 (RA51 KVS) photographed at Thames Ditton. GEOFF RIXON

Left: Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLE 902 (W902 UJM) on the upgraded Solent Clipper service, on which TGM previously operated conventional coaches. DAVID JUKES

2 TRAVEL FINALLY BITES THE DUST

2 Travel Group, the South Wales operator that hoped to grow big by being listed on the Alternative Investment Market, was finally wound up in May.

An unopposed compulsory winding up order was issued at a county court hearing in Leeds. It was made after petitioner Haydock Finance, of Blackburn, lodged a claim of £190,624 with the court. Six further claims, which put the overall figure at £972,645, were also made, although it is believed no court order was made in those cases. Five of those were from companies based in England while Cardiff solicitors Darwin Gray made the sixth, for £17,079.

Two Shamrock Coaches subsidiaries, Wales & the Marches Bus Company and Bridgend Bus Company, have taken over six tendered and five commercial routes in Neath on the same timetables as operated by 2 Travel, which was based at Pentrechwyth, Swansea. First Cymru had already taken over Carmarthenshire contracts withdrawn from 2 Travel, which operated them with brand new MCV-bodied MAN buses.

2 Travel — founded five years ago — was floated on AIM in January 2003. It failed to make either a profit or a significant acquisition post-flotation and was expelled from AIM last December. Its operator licence was revoked in January, but it appealed successfully against that ultimate penalty.

RED LIGHT FOR DARLINGTON GREEN BUS

Green Bus, the Darlington independent set up by former Stagecoach manager Richard Cranmer, went into voluntary liquidation on 21 May with the loss of 40 jobs.

Above: Green Bus 69 (W769 URP) was the only one of its four Mini Pointer Darts painted in fleet livery. GARY MITCHELHILL

When it started operating in November 2003, all Green Bus's services were contracted by Darlington Borough Council, which used existing funds and £1.07 million of Urban Bus Challenge funding to plug gaps left by the withdrawal of various Arriva and Stagecoach routes. It ran a mix of secondhand and rental midibuses, as well as four council-owned Optare Alero minibuses.

'Problems with the Aleros, however, coupled with the fact that the service they were used on was extremely poorly used, led to their and the service's withdrawal at the end of November 2004, with the buses being stored on Green Bus premises pending a decision on their future,' says Richard Cranmer.

'The other services continued, with passenger numbers increasing steadily and consistently, but following a re-tendering exercise in mid May, some rural services were lost to Arriva. The remaining services, while profitable, were insufficient to cover all of the company's overheads and repay some of the debt that had been taken on, so the reluctant decision was taken to place the company into voluntary liquidation.'

Green Bus
PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL SERVICES PREVIOUSLY OPERATED BY GREEN BUS WILL BE REINSTATED WITH EFFECT FROM THURSDAY 27 MAY 2005
Services will be operated by various other bus companies, under contract to Darlington Borough Council. All routes and timetables will be the same.
For further information telephone Traveline on 0870 608 2 608

Picture: JEFF TATTERSALL

Arriva North East, Stagecoach and JSB Travel have stepped in to provide replacement services. To cover the additional commitments, Arriva has hired three Optare MetroRiders from Blackpool Transport.

Richard Cranmer is to manage a new City Sightseeing open-top tour in Durham this summer. A year ago, Green Bus moved from its original Yarm Road depot to a larger site on Banks Road. It shared the depot with City Sightseeing's owner, Ensignbus, which used it to store vehicles for the Ensign dealership in Essex.

Left: Blackpool Optare MetroRider 596 (N596 LCK) covering one of the former Green Bus contracts for Arriva North East. NEIL WISE

ARRIVA PULLS OUT OF PRESTON

Arriva North West withdrew its last service into Preston — its northernmost destination — after 28 May.

Service 303 (Ormskirk-Preston) has been cut in half to terminate at Tarleton. It was one of the remnants of Ribble's express service X61, later 761, between Liverpool and Blackpool, which became jointly operated with North Western when Ribble was broken up in 1986. After the route was split up to improve reliability, the Ormskirk-Preston section remained a joint operation between the two companies until North Western (now Arriva North West) became the sole operator in a mid-1990s route rationalisation exercise.

Right: Arriva North West East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dart 1259 (N259 CKA) leaving Preston bus station on one of the last through journeys on service 303. LUKE GOTTARD

MORE AYATS OPEN-TOPS FOR CITY SIGHTSEEING . . . FIRST ONES FOR ARRIVA

Another 20 open-top Ayats-bodied Volvo B7L double-deckers have been imported to Britain — 10 each for City Sightseeing and for Arriva's Original London Sightseeing Tour.

The City Sightseeing vehicles follow four bought last year for its Bath, Cambridge and London fleets. Six of this year's delivery of Spanish-bodied double-deckers are going to Bath, where First has pulled out of the tour bus market, leaving City Sightseeing only in competition with Ryan's City Tours. Four of the latest buses for Bath are notable in having partially covered top decks — believed to be the first new double-deckers in the world to be built with this feature.

Arriva's 10 are also London's first new open-top and wheelchair accessible sightseeing buses. They form part of orders for around 600 buses and coaches announced by Arriva in May for its UK and European fleets for delivery this year.

The UK orders call for 320 vehicles, but many of these are already in service; 187 (including the 10 open-toppers) are for London, the others for its Midlands, North East, North West & Wales, Shires & Essex and Southern Counties fleets.

One notable feature is that only 90 are VDL Bus products — 32 DB250 double-deckers, 42 SB120 midibuses, 10 SB200 single-decks (all 84 with Wright bodies) and six Van Hool-bodied SB4000+ coaches. Arriva Bus & Coach is the VDL importer for the UK. Alexander Dennis is supplying 62 Pointer Darts of various lengths; Volvo 72 Alexander Dennis-bodied B7TLs and the 10 open-toppers; Mercedes-Benz 46 articulated Citaros for London; Scania 14 OmniCity single-deckers to North East for the Durham revamp and 19 Wright-bodied L94UBs to Shires & Essex; and Optare two 9.5m Solos supplied to the Shires & Essex earlier this year.

The bulk of the European orders are for Sweden (104 vehicles) and Denmark (73) with over 100 split among the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and recently acquired German fleets.

Above: City Sightseeing part open-topper 272 (EU05 VBG) in service in Bath. MARTIN CURTIS

Above: Arriva VLY603 (LX05 GDZ) in Park Lane, London on 4 June. MARK LYONS

BOVA SUPPLIES FIRST UK 15M AND RELAUNCHES MAGIQ

A Bova Futura Magnum 15-430XE for Barfordian Coaches of Bedford is the UK's first 15m PSV. The Moseley PCV dealership delivered it shortly before Bova — now part of Dutch-owned VDL Bus & Coach — announced plans to relaunch its now six-year-old Magiq coach in the UK.

Barfordian chose the 67-seat three-axle Futura — the design could accommodate 69 — as an alternative to the Neoplan Skyliner double-deckers it uses on European private hires for youth groups. These groups rarely exceed 65 people. Barfordian director Kevin Bullard hopes it will be less expensive to fuel and maintain than the Skyliners and says it also has more luggage space. Despite its extra length, he says drivers have responded well to the coach, which is equipped with a reversing camera.

VDL Bova, meanwhile, is reintroducing the Magiq to the UK this summer, four years after the first three right-hand-drive models were built, then were re-acquired and sold for operation in the Republic of Ireland. VDL, which bought Bova nearly two years ago, says it has resolved production quality problems with the Magiq, much of which is bonded rather than welded or bolted. The original 12m coach has been superseded by a 12.2m Magiq and has been joined by two three-axle Magiq Magnum variants, a 13.1m 53-seater and a 13.9m 57-seater. All are powered by 340 and 380hp, 12.6litre DAF XE engines.

Left: Better than a double-decker? Barfordian's 15m Futura. ANDY IZATT

Left: A right-hand-drive Irish-registered Bova Magiq in Waterford in May. BARRIE GILBERT

Also destined for the UK is the Bova Synergy double-deck coach, essentially a modified Berkhof Axial 100-bodied DAF SBR4000 sold and supported by the Bova network.

■ **Bova launches DP coach, p14.**

ALEXANDER DENNIS UNVEILS HIGH-CAPACITY ENVIRO400

Alexander Dennis has taken the wraps off its first new product, its eagerly awaited Enviro400 double-decker. The company — formed last year to buy the bus and chassis side of TransBus International — describes this compact, high-capacity bus as 'a radical step forward in double-deck design'.

Although work on the Enviro400 began under TransBus ownership, it assumed a higher priority for the new company, which wanted to combine layout advances with striking styling to match the lead set by Wrightbus with its Gemini double-decker. The finished product has the glazed front roof dome first shown on drawings released earlier this year and published in March *Buses*. Alexander Dennis says this will make it 'instantly recognisable, giving it real street presence'.

However, the major advances are beneath the skin of what remains a conventionally engineered rear-engined double-decker. The chassis on the first vehicles is developed from the Trident, with transverse Cummins ISCe Euro3 engine, and the lightweight body retains the welded aluminium frame of the ALX400 and export market Enviro500 models. By redesigning and relocation key components, however, it has produced a full low-floor vehicle with nine more lower deck seats than an equivalent length ALX400 Trident — 36 rather than 27 on the single-door long wheelbase version. Not only that, but the short wheelbase two-door Enviro400 has more seats than its long-wheelbase predecessor.

Three of the extra seats are directly behind the driver — one under what it describes as an 'ingeniously redesigned' staircase with reshaped and repositioned fuel tank, the other two in front of the nearside front wheelarch. These help provide seven seats within immediate reach of the entrance, which — at 1,200mm — is wider than before.

The other six extra seats are in the wheelbase and have been accommodated by a combination of features. The compact wheelchair bay incorporates the powered restraint arm first fitted in the prototype TransBus Enviro200 midibuses in 2003. Where specified (almost exclusively for London), the exit door is repositioned and seat positions towards the rear have also been altered. The gently sloping floor is step-free up to the final row of seats.

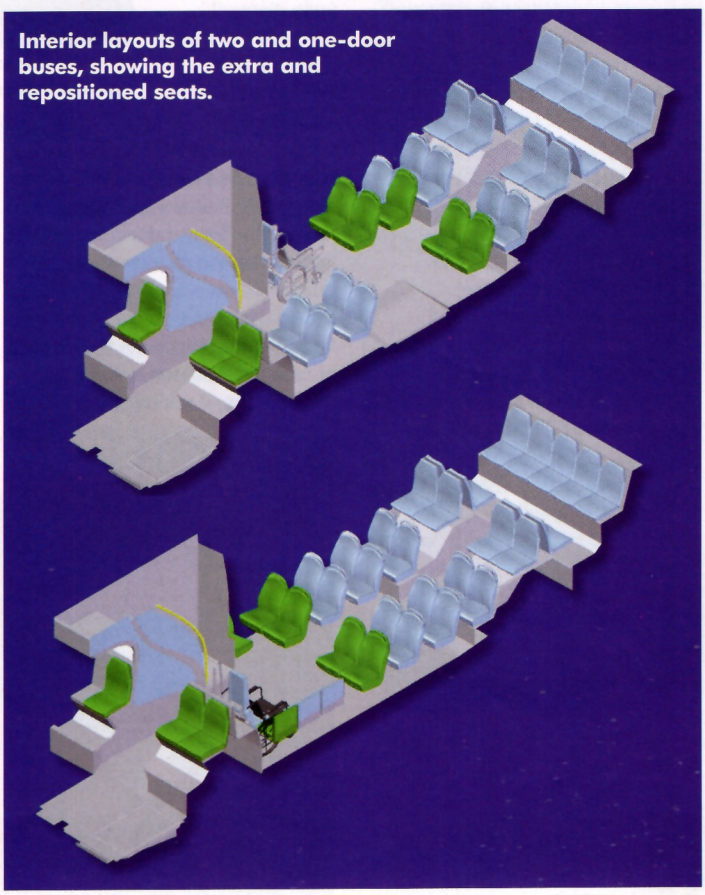
Above and right: Artist's impressions of a two-door long wheelbase Enviro400 for Metroline and a single-door equivalent for Travel West Midlands.

Alexander Dennis has also designed the bus to be easier to repair. In response to customer demand, the nearside front chassis members and associated body panels — the areas most vulnerable to accident damage — are quickly detachable to speed and reduce the complexity of crash repairs. Upstairs, it says the curved windscreen will provide panoramic views; it comes as standard with pressurised ventilation, with air conditioning as an option.

The Enviro400 has multiplex wiring and the driver's cab includes an instrument binnacle with repositioned switches and warning lights grouped together in a 'soft touch' panel with a single display that highlights the condition of all main vehicle systems.

The first vehicles are already being built at the manufacturer's airport people mover plant at Lochlands, near Falkirk. Vehicles with Euro4 engines — Alexander Dennis has been testing two Tridents in London with Caterpillar C7 units — are due in production by the second quarter of next year. It also plans to offer the new body on other chassis — notably the new Volvo B9TL — although those versions may not offer such a gain in seating capacity as with the Trident-based vehicle.

Full details of the Enviro400 in next month's *Buses*



Interior layouts of two and one-door buses, showing the extra and repositioned seats.

PLAXTON IS BACK BUILDING BUSES

Plaxton marked its first anniversary as an independent business by announcing its return to the full-size single-deck bus market, a move that pitches it into direct competition with former sister company Alexander Dennis.

A prototype of its new Centro body is already being built — a 10.7m version on a VDL SB120 chassis — and production begins in September. Its first public showing will be at the Coach & Bus Live show in Birmingham on 4 and 5 October. Plaxton intends to launch two other variants next January — a 10.2m Centro-bodied SB120 for London and an 11.8m version on the MAN 14.220 chassis. It may offer longer versions in future, but doesn't intend to build it on shorter chassis.

Bus and coach production will be kept in separate buildings at the company's Scarborough site, with separate management teams. The bus assembly hall, which has lain empty since former owner TransBus transferred production of the Pointer body to Falkirk in 2001, will be reopened and re-equipped to build the Centro, which is part of a £1.2 million new product development plan.

Plaxton has accelerated its return to the bus market by acquiring the intellectual rights to Bus2000, the bus that former owner Henlys began developing in August 1998 to replace the Pointer. It was conceived as a 2.5m wide, semi-integral of up to 12m length. Plaxton built three prototypes — two on Volvo B6BLE chassis, a third on a chassis that was part-Plaxton/part-Volvo — but the project was shelved when TransBus was formed in 2000.

Henlys then commissioned the Scarborough-based design engineers to develop it into a project code-named Sword, a 10.7m long, 2.6m wide low-floor bus for its Blue Bird subsidiary in the United States. Over 70 — called the Ultra LF — were built in Scarborough before production transferred to the US.

The core of the design team still works on the Scarborough site, working for a company called Trailertech Services, and Plaxton has contracted them to help develop the 2.5m wide Centro in co-operation with bus specialist Capoco Design. Although it uses a similar bolted and riveted aluminium construction system to the Pointer, the key difference — as first developed for Bus2000 — is a large multi-hollow extruded cantrail section to provide the strength needed for a semi-integral 12m bus with gasket glazing and cantilever seating. The designers accept now that the 11.3m Super Pointer Dart was a Pointer too far, as the body could flex under stress.

Although the Ultra LF went through the full US Altoona durability and maintenance test programme to simulate 12 years of use, Plaxton is subjecting the Centro to a further finite element analysis test before putting it into production.

Above: Besides also having a model name ending in the letter 'o', the Centro's styling has a hint of the Optare Tempo.

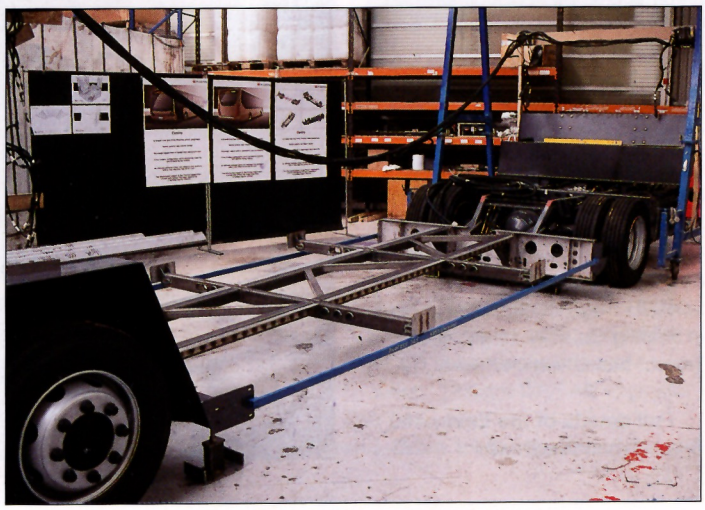
Single-door versions will have a sloping floor with a single step ahead of the rear axle, while the two-door Centro will have a flat floor and two steps behind the centre door. It will be built as a complete vehicle, with a Plaxton-supplied centre chassis frame in galvanised steel. For ease of maintenance and to minimise parts stocks, it will have equal length window bays and an option of bonded or gasket glazing all round. The windscreen can either be single-piece or two-piece with the second piece being the destination box glazing.

Plaxton chief executive Brian Davidson says many customers have encouraged it to re-enter the bus market. 'Clearly, some run coaches and buses and it was not that long ago that bus production was coming out of this factory,' he says. 'Some customers are looking for choice. If we can meet their aspirations, I believe we can succeed.'

Despite an apparent trend towards operators buying heavier duty buses — Plymouth's order for Mercedes-Benz Citaros is the latest of several such moves — and slow UK sales of other medium weight chassis like the VDL SB200, he is convinced that there is a strong market for vehicles in this class.

Plaxton hopes to build up production within 18 months to over 200 Centros a year, but is only aiming to produce 60 in its first year. It has taken pre-launch orders for 20 on SB120 chassis — 10 each from Volvo and Arriva Bus & Coach, which already sell it with Wright bodywork, and 10 on MAN chassis from Mistral Bus & Coach.

■ **Plaxton one year on, p22**



Right: The first SB120 chassis ready for bodying at Scarborough, with the centre chassis section in place.

BEAVER SWIMS ON WITH WHEELCHAIR LIFT

Plaxton has launched its new version of the Mercedes-Benz Vario-based Beaver 2 midibus to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Demand from operators who find low-floor buses unsuitable for their routes — notably Woods of Leicester and Western Greyhound of Newquay — persuaded Plaxton to adapt the 2.2m wide, 8.5m long Beaver 2 to meet the new legislation. It has a compact PLS lift behind the nearside rear wheel, far enough forward to accommodate a rear luggage boot if required. Wheelchair access is by a hinged door, derived from the emergency door on the Cheetah coach.

It has a flat, slightly higher floor than the previous Beaver 2. Window pillars are relocated to fit the lift, which may seldom see regular use. The extra weight of the lift means there are two fewer seats than in an equivalent non-accessible Beaver 2 — up to 29 with a boot, 31 without. At around £63,500, it is £4,500 dearer than its predecessor, but Plaxton says it is £20,000 cheaper than a low-floor 9.2m Optare Solo with comparable seating capacity.

Left: One of the first DDA-compliant Beaver 2s is a 25-seater with extra legroom for MacLeod's Coaches of Rogart in the Scottish Highlands.

FIRSTGROUP ORDERS 24 ACCESSIBLE PROFILES

FirstGroup has ordered the first new Plaxton accessible coaches with a foldaway wheelchair lift in the widened front entrance. It is taking 24 Profile-bodied Volvo B7Rs — 21 for First Cymru, three for First Devon & Cornwall's Exeter-Bude route — for summer delivery. Plaxton will also offer a similar feature on its high-floor Paragon coach.

SCARBOROUGH TO BODY NEW MAN COACH

Plaxton is adding MAN to its coach chassis partners. It has reached agreement with Mentor Coach & Bus — the Neoman dealer — to build Paragon and Panther bodies on MAN's new R33 chassis with the first example due by the fourth quarter of the year. It may be at the Coach & Bus Live show in October.

Mentor, rather than Plaxton, will sell the coaches. Besides Neoman, Mentor's UK Coach & Bus subsidiary holds the Irisbus franchise; Plaxton already builds small volumes of Paragon bodies on the Irisbus EuroRider.

■ MAN says its exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) engines will, after all, comply with Euro5 emission limits, so its customers will not need to use AdBlue fuel additives.

BIGGEST TEMPO ORDER

Ceredigion County Council has placed the biggest order yet for the Optare Tempo single-decker. It is buying 12 (12m and 12.6m examples), to be leased to First Cymru, Arriva Cymru and Richards Brothers for three Traws Cambria-branded routes linking Aberystwyth with Cardigan, New Quay and Carmarthen.

■ **More problems for Optare parent, p15**

CENTRA LAUNCHES JETCOACH

Centra Passenger Services filled a gap in the Green Line and National Express networks on 31 May by launching Jetcoach, an hourly weekday executive coach service linking Heathrow Airport with hotels and business parks around Cobham, Byfleet, Weybridge, Chertsey and Staines with a maximum £9 return fare. Once they are all ready, Centra plans to use ex-Hallmark Plaxton Panther-bodied Dennis R-series coaches with tables at each seat.

They have been modified to meet Disability Discrimination Act accessibility standards, but cannot accommodate wheelchairs. Besides business travellers, Centra hopes the 06.00 to 20.00 service will attract commuters and shoppers.

Picture by GEOFF RIXON

The National Association of Road Transport Museums has produced its first-ever leaflet listing 57 road transport museums and collections across the British Isles, with contact details and opening dates. Ian Allan Publishing is helping distribute the leaflet, which is available post free from the Marketing Department, Ian Allan Publishing, 4 Watling Drive, Hinckley, LE10 3EY. You may request it by e-mail via *Buses* at alan@millar1.demon.co.uk

NARTM
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A GUIDE TO ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS MADE ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC BY NARTM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS
2005
Representing Independent Road Transport Museums and Collections

ASSEMBLY MEMBERS DEMAND BETTER WELSH SCHOOLBUSES

An all-party report by Welsh Assembly members says local authorities should invest in higher quality schoolbuses and phase out double-deckers.

The Assembly's education and lifelong learning committee wants councils to improve schoolbus safety and tackle poor pupil behaviour. Older buses — especially double-deckers — should be replaced by modern vehicles with seatbelts and closed circuit television, and staffed by trained adult escorts. It suggests that sound systems be fitted to entertain and calm down children and that storage facilities are provided for musical instruments and sports bags.

The committee accepts that these measures would increase costs, but says they could be offset by staggering school hours to make better use of the buses. This already happens in Newport, where the council-owned bus company *(see p28)* has reduced behaviour problems by introducing seven Scania/Irizar S-Kool yellow schoolbuses.

Right: The bus that appeared on our May front cover, former Cardiff Bus RKG 426Y, was one of several Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Ailsas sold to Edwards, Llantwit Fardre in 2001. JOHN MARSH

AWARDS DEADLINE ONLY DAYS AWAY

Entries and nominations for this year's UK Bus Awards must be submitted by 1 July.

This is one of several changes to the awards, which have been running for 10 years and were previously called the Bus Industry Awards. Several new awards categories include a London Customer Service Champion of the Year, a technical development award and transport authority of the year. The main award — Bus Operator of the Year — has always gone to a large operator, with Nottingham City Transport winning in 2004. This year, there will be separate small and large operator awards for operating excellence, with the two winners going head-to-head for Operator of the Year.

For details, contact www.ukbusawards.co.uk.

TWM doubles its Saver Bus

Travel West Midlands converted its cut-price Saver Bus service in Birmingham to double-deck in late-May. As well as replacing the six branded Leyland Lynxes with a like number of MCW Metrobuses, it extended service 26 from Bromford Bridge to Kingshurst and increased the flat fare from 60p to 70p. *Picture by BEN MORROLL*

Right: Stagecoach North West has revived the traditional Morecambe & Heysham Corporation livery on Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 14204 (J204 HFR), which appeared at the company's Morecambe depot open day on 28 May. IAN SIMPSON

CORGI MODELS T9 ALIZÉE FOR COLLECTORS

Corgi is launching a 1/76th scale Original Omnibus Company model of the Van Hool T9 Alizée coach — its first new bus or coach diecast for a year. First into the shops, in September, will depict a Shearings Volvo B12M in the latest livery. An Arriva Midlands VDL SB4000 in National Express livery follows in November.

New versions of existing castings include the Wright Eclipse Gemini double-decker in Yorkshire Coastliner, Travel Dundee and First London liveries, a boxed pair of East Lancs double-decker and Pointer Dart midibus in Metrobus livery and a Plaxton Panorama I of Barton. Two Irish models coming are an articulated Wright Eclipse Fusion in the latest Dublin Bus livery and an East Lancs Myllennium Vyking in Cork park-&-ride green.

Three 1/50th scale Buses in Britain models will be London Routemaster RM1279, a Norfolk Coach Hire Bedford VAL/Plaxton Panorama and Aberdeen utility Daimler 155.

■ **Look out for a T9 model competition in next month's *Buses***

Bus Opportunities with Bus People

METROLINE MD STEPS DOWN

Steve McAleavy, managing director of London bus operator Metroline for the past three years, is to leave during the summer. Since joining the Singapore-owned company from National Express Coaches, he has commuted daily from his home in the West Midlands. Operations director **Sean O'Shea** will be acting MD.

GRADUATES ON THE MOVE AT STAGECOACH

Two of the graduate trainees recruited by Stagecoach are moving between companies in the South Midlands. Stagecoach Warwickshire Nuneaton operations manager **Simon Mathieson** *(pictured)*, who joined Stagecoach South in 2002 after completing a degree in transport management at Aston University, has become local bus manager at Stagecoach Oxford. His successor at Nuneaton is Stagecoach Oxford's Banbury and Witney operations manager, **Joe Davies**. He also joined Stagecoach three years ago, after graduating from Paisley University with a degree in politics and social policy.

GAVIN BOOTH CHAIRS BUS USERS UK

Buses Focus joint editor **Gavin Booth** has taken over the chairmanship of the Bus Users UK pressure group from **Caroline Cahm**, who founded the organisation (as the National Federation of Bus Users) and has become the group's first-ever president. Gavin Booth, who was Scottish Bus Group marketing manager in the 1980s, takes over many of the day-to-day responsibilities at BUUK, while Caroline Cahm will concentrate on projects with the Department for Transport and on developing the organisation's bus user surgeries around the country.

NEW TRANSPORT MINISTERS

A new ministerial team has been appointed at the Department for Transport, following Labour's re-election on 5 May. **Stephen Ladyman** succeeds **Tony McNulty** as minister of state, while junior ministers **Karen Buck** and **David Twigg** succeed **Charlotte Atkins** and **David Jamieson**. **Alistair Darling** remains transport secretary.

EAST KENT BOOK WINNERS

The six winners of our May competition to win copies of the new Ian Allan Publishing *Glory Days East Kent* book were Aidan Brittan of Ashbourne, K. J. Gates of Sittingbourne, A. N. Goodwin of Northampton, P. Jennings of Chatham, T. R. Underwood of Barham and John Young of Stockport. Congratulations to you all for knowing that East Kent was based in Canterbury, it is owned today by Stagecoach and its 30 underfloor-engined Dennis coaches were Lancets.

■ **For this month's competition to win an autographed Stagecoach book, see p26**

IN *BUSES* NEXT MONTH **On sale 15 July**

- **Routemaster specials: We visit Timebus**
- **The new Enviro400 in detail**
- **Alan Westwell: a lifetime in buses**
- **Win a new Corgi T9**
- **PLUS all the latest news and Fleet News**

Bus Electrician

Required

Sullivan Buses based in South Hertfordshire are looking for a qualified bus electrician to work at our North Mymms depot.

We operate a mixed fleet of more than 50 vehicles from depots around London. Our buses are a mixture of former London vehicles including Routemaster, Leyland Titan, Olympian, Metrobus, Volvo SLF, Dennis Dart & Dennis trident.

We are looking for a highly motivated individual who can organise his/her own time and can meet the high standards we expect from our staff.

Operations are 24hrs seven days a week and this post will entail some shift working to suit needs of the business. Sullivan Buses are happy to agree flexible duty times if this suits the sucessful applicant.

Salary is subject to qualifications and negotiation.

Full details of this post, types of vehicles and an application form are available on our web site www.sullivanbuses.com or alternatively please phone Eric Barker on 01707 646803 for an application form.

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VDL LAUNCHES DP SINGLE-DECK FOR MAINLAND EUROPE

VDL Bus & Coach, the Dutch manufacturing group, has closed a gap in its mainland European range by launching the Lexio inter-city coach — a vehicle in the mould of the largely extinct British dual purpose single-decker.

Although it is badged as a VDL Bova and will be sold and supported by the Bova organisation, other VDL companies will build it. Its running units, with 310hp DAF 9.2litre PF engine and ZF automatic transmission, are supplied by VDL Bus International (the former DAF Bus) and are derived from those for the VDL SB4000+ coach with independent front suspension.

VDL Berkhof builds the partially stainless steel bodywork at its Valkenswaard plant, which is in the same town as Bova's coach factory. It will be offered in two lengths, either as the two-axle 12.3m LD123 or the three-axle 13m LD130. Floor height is a constant 860mm at the front and centre doors.

VOLVO GOES VERTICAL FOR EGYPT AND S AFRICA

Volvo has raided its corporate parts bin to develop a 12litre vertical-engined coach for the Egyptian and South African markets.

The new B12R is built in Brazil and is derived from the rugged, rear-engined B7R, now Volvo's best-selling bus and coach chassis in the world. It has a vertical version of the 12litre engine used horizontally in the rear-engined B12B and mid-engined B12M. Volvo has secured orders for 60 — with Marcopolo, Buscar and Irizar bodies — from seven inter-city operators in South Africa, and for a further 20 tourist coaches in Egypt. Ghabbour, Volvo's importer, will body the Egyptian coaches.

An Irizar-bodied Volvo B12R for South Africa.

The Egyptian market appears to have been a key to developing this new model. Håkan Sjöberg, Volvo's sales manager for Africa, says: 'It has been five years since we last had an order from Egypt as we didn't have a chassis that fulfilled customer requirements. But we do now with the B12R.' It also hopes to increase its share of the South African market, where it is the third largest supplier and sold 170 vehicles last year, giving it around a fifth of the bus and coach market.

The B12R is the latest of a series of niche models Volvo has developed for key markets. It also produced a B6RLE for China, a 6litre-engined short wheelbase midibus based on the B7RLE.

GERMAN VOLVO PLANT AGAIN UNDER THREAT

Around 200 employees at Volvo's coachbuilding works in Germany face an uncertain future after the Swedish parent company said it was no longer willing to shoulder losses at the former Drögmöller plant.

The factory at Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg state builds the rear-engined 9900 as a complete coach for the left-hand-drive market, offering both two and three-axle versions. The range has a reputation for high build quality, but sales in Germany have been disappointing.

Bo Wargh, director of Volvo Buses Germany, says productivity levels in Heilbronn are not satisfactory but he did not comment directly on the future of the plant.

Volvo bought Drögmöller in 1994, adopting the company's trademark sloping theatre floor for its own-brand products. Earmarked for closure six years ago, the plant was saved by a last-minute decision to revamp the 9900. Staff are keen to run the business themselves, but managers at Volvo's Gothenburg headquarters have refused to discuss a proposed employee-buyout.

Up and coming Turkish manufacturer Temsa has expressed interest in taking over the Heilbronn plant and the firm's distribution chief in Germany, Volker Steimle, confirmed that exploratory talks have taken place. No firm agreement has been reached, he says, adding: 'We have to get to know each other a little better first.'

A South Korean-built Hyundai in service in the Turkish capital city of Ankara earlier this year. RICHARD LOMAS.

NABI LOSS UP TENFOLD AS COMPOBUS PLANT CLOSES

A 45ft CompoBus for Alabama Metro being handed over in December 2003.

North American Bus Industries, the Hungarian-owned parent company of Optare in the UK, lost £1.9 million ($3.5 million) in the first quarter of 2005, 10 times the loss it recorded in the same quarter last year.

NABI argues that the bulk of the loss came as a direct result of restructuring. And with the closure of its Kaposvár plant in Hungary in May, management is confident it can turn the corner. Kaposvár opened in 2001 with capacity to build up to 250 bodies a year as well as underframes for the Optare Alero minibus. Its future has been in doubt since the United States Federal Transportation Administration denied NABI an extension of the Buy America Act waiver for the CompoBus, whose composite body shells were produced there.

Effectively, the denial of the waiver meant that NABI could no longer sell the CompoBus on the American market, and the decision to cease production of the line was published in NABI's fourth quarter report for 2004. NABI laid off 168 plant workers in January, with the remaining skeleton staff of just over 60 completing existing orders before production stopped towards the end of May.

Exactly what will happen to the plant is as yet unknown, although the report states that the management is looking at the prospect of selling 'certain businesses and assets'. It adds that 'the cessation of CompoBus production and closure of the Kaposvár facility will improve the group's financial performance and cash flow later in 2005'.

Financial analysts are less optimistic, reiterating that the company's fate lies in the hands of its creditors, and that its ownership structure remains an issue. Over half of the bottom-line losses were the result of £1 million costs paid to consultants and other items associated with the restructuring that has been underway for six months.

NABI has told the Budapest Stock Exchange that operations have stabilised. Year-on-year, first quarter deliveries of NABI vehicles fell by 4.2% to 272. Revenue fell 5.6% to £49 million, but the cost of sales decreased 6.4% to £45 million. Indebtedness in the form of short-term loans stood practically unchanged at £57 million.

One Hungarian analyst, Mónika Tabányi of Concorde Securities, says the debt level is 'a very real danger for the company'. A further area of uncertainty is that 54% of NABI shares are held by the First Hungary Fund, which is being wound up. A management buy-out is possible. Another analyst, Kornél Sarkadi Szabó of the Raiffeisen Bank, says: 'I see a chance for NABI to survive, but only if the fruits of the reorganisation and closure of the CompoBus production centre are seen soon.'

DANISH OPERATOR SIDESTEPS EU SAFETY LAW

A Danish coach operator is avoiding European Union safety regulations by re-registering its vehicles in neighbouring Sweden, which also is an EU member

Vagns Turist, which operates 22 sleeper coaches on a range of routes within Denmark and Continental Europe, says it cannot afford the modifications required under EU law from 1 May. Sweden is not insisting on implementation and Vagns vehicles will carry Swedish numberplates from the summer. In recent years, several people have been killed in accidents involving Danish sleeper coaches and EU rules stipulate that these must now be fitted with strengthened bulkheads to prevent injury in case of a collision. The vehicle's speedometer must also be clearly visible to all passengers during the journey.

Vagns estimates the cost per coach at around £4,500 and questions the effectiveness of the new measures. 'It is an absurd but logical consequence of the failure to implement legislation throughout the EU,' says Steen Bundgaard, head of the Danish bus operators' federation.

Germany is preparing to ban sleeper buses altogether, but Scandinavian operators use semi-sleeper coaches with foldable berths on through routes to Spain and Portugal and will not be affected by the ruling.

A contrast of new and old in the Polish city of Katowice, with a modern low-floor Jelcz Vecto M125M of PKM Katowice alongside a high-floor Hungarian-built Ikarus 280. STEVE KELLY

Thor buys Goshen

Thor Industries, the United States' largest midibus manufacturer, has acquired the assets of van-derived minibus builder Goshen Coach for approximately £5.2 million. Goshen, based in Indiana, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in May. Thor, which also builds complete ElDorado National buses, says it will keep Goshen as a separate entity.

Swedish city orders Polish buses

Polarbuss, operating in the Swedish city of Umeä, has ordered the first six Polish-built Solaris diesel buses for the homeland of Volvo and Scania.

It is buying three full low-floor Urbino 18 articulated buses and three of the recently introduced low-entry versions of the Urbino 12 rigid and has an option to buy a further seven next year. They will be equipped with wider tyres, auxiliary floor heating and door insulation to cope with the city's harsh winter climate.

Inside Track

with Andrew Braddock

A quiet Polish girl called *Elvira*

I see that, once again, good old BC reverted to his trolleybus theme last month, so just to lend support to his praise for this fine mode of transport (and to save the editor a difficult job in finding an illustration to go with my words) the picture accompanying this month's offering is one of mine.

It shows *Elvira* at Landskrona Station in Sweden, and she is one of just three low-floor Solaris Trollino 12s operating on that small city's 3km trolley line, which opened in September 2003 and is, of course, numbered 3. Her sisters are named *Ella* and *Ellen* and all three pick up the 'E for Electric' and 'E for Environment' theme.

It is fun to imagine such an amazing project happening in the UK. Landskrona was faced with the loss of its centrally located railway station in favour of a shiny new one on the edge of the city. That was all part of a project to realign the tracks in the run-up to the construction of the Øresund bridge and tunnel linking southern Sweden with Copenhagen.

Asked for trams, settled for trolleys

Instead of being at the end of a branch line from Lund, Landskrona would benefit from faster, more frequent and direct trains to Gothenburg and Malmo (no longer requiring one change) in addition to the brand new service to Denmark. It was a bit like having a new Parkway station, but the city council was rightly concerned that this would be difficult to access by public transport compared to the existing one right in the heart of the city. It lobbied the Swedish government for a tramway, but settled for the money to build a trolleybus line instead.

With the support of the enterprising Polish bus manufacturer Solaris — whose Trollino was already operating in a few Czech cities and in Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia) and on two of the three trolley networks of its homeland — and the Hungarian electrical equipment supplier Ganz, Landskrona was able to buy three state-of-the-art vehicles with auxiliary battery power capable of full line-speed operation. There was no need for expensive special work in the overhead; each vehicle simply lowers its trolleybooms to go to the depot at night and *vice versa* in the morning.

One year after the trolleys took over line 3 from the interim diesel bus service, passenger numbers were up 16% and still growing. The new station car park is only used now by people coming from the surrounding rural area. *Ella, Ellen* and *Elvira* are, in fact, operated by Arriva, making it the second of the big UK transport groups to run trolleybuses. Stagecoach was first with its acquisition of Wellington City Transport in New Zealand.

Why couldn't it happen here? For a start, the operators would be bound to be against trolleybuses and the government wouldn't fund the extra cost of them anyway. The planners would also have designed the new station on the assumption that everyone would drive there — just like an out-of-town superstore. Pity.

Cost of everything, value of nothing?

Still . . . back to the plot. In my May column, I pointed out the major flaws of one-person operation conversion in the UK. And if we were to hazard a guess at the reasoning behind this country's methodology and compare it with that of the Swiss, for example, I think it comes down to a deeply ingrained belief that costs and their progressive reduction were all that mattered.

That was certainly the belief of successive UK governments, of local politicians — including many of those with some responsibility for municipal transport undertakings — and of the bulk of senior people in the National Bus Company. This was not entirely their fault, I hasten to add, but was at least in part a function of the Great British Malaise of failing to understand what market we are in. By that, I mean the over-concentration on buses — as just one case in point — as an industry quite separate from cars and their use, or from railways (the latter generally being seen as not worth co-ordinating services with).

Sadly, the cost-reduction ethic continues to this day with just a few bright sparks pursuing the alternative strategy of revenue growth. Costs can only be reduced — ultimately — to zero, while expansion of income has no limits.

By the 1960s, our Continental cousins, on the other hand, were obsessed with the need to tailor public transport to the market it served. To make it competitive with the car rather than simply manage the decline that greater car ownership implied, thereby hastening still further the loss of passengers.

To have introduced a system that not only added about 25% to journey times but also removed, at a stroke, the consistency of them would have been unthinkable. That is why, when they took away the conductors, their job was given to the passengers. Time, rather than distance-based fares, usually one flat fare for a whole city, with unlimited transfer between vehicles; no on-board ticketing (unless it was from a self-serve machine or involved a much higher price for only the single-ride option); pavement ticket machines at most or all stops plus a plethora of retail sales outlets became the norm. Oh and penalty fares, of course. But at a realistic level to create the 'fear factor' as well as making it worth collecting.

Next month we will see how this worked in practice and then consider another lesson for UK transport policy (or lack of it) — the fact that '. . . the bitterness of poor quality is rarely exceeded by the sweetness of low price'.

Right: As Andrew Braddock explains, Arriva's Swedish subsidiary operates *Elvira* and her sisters on the streets of Landskrona.

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- **London Buses in 2004** - This book is a review of the routes, vehicles, operators, significant events as well as the politics of the year that make up the story that was 2004. Topics included are Routemaster 50, Armchair, fuel cell buses, Thorpes, the special operations to commemorate last days of crew operation, goodbye to the Metrobus, all over adverts and Bendybuses; 64 pages fully illustrated in colour - £7.00 (£6.00 to members).

- **Service Vehicle Fleet History** – This new publication is the first full update for over 25 years and covers the years from 1914 to 2005 with some 6200 vehicles listed by number, registration, type and all known allocations. A4 size 112 pages, with over 100 illustrations including 15 in colour - £9.00 (£7.50 to members).

- **London Bus and Tram Fleetbook 2005** – up-to-date to March 2005, includes almost 10,000 vehicles with all the leading operators in London and the home counties in one handy A6 pocket sized publication. Order now, before stocks run out again - £7.00 (£6.50 to members).

- And don't forget that the **Autumn Transport Spectacular** will be at Harrow on the 29th October.

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IN LONDON

CAPITAL NEWS AND VIEWS FROM JOHN ALDRIDGE

YET MORE ARTICS IN LATEST CONTRACT AWARDS ROUND

A further route or two — depending on how you count — to go over to articulated buses will be the 29 (Palmers Green-Trafalgar Square) and N29 (Ponders End-Trafalgar Square), as part of a series of tender awards announced in May.

Arriva London North has won the routes again: a peak requirement of 29 artics will replace the current low-floor double-deck PVR of 35. That will increase the total passenger capacity on the routes, though the number of seats available will reduce.

Talking of which, I wish Transport for London wouldn't talk of 'more comfort' on its various leaflets about the introduction of artics. Replacing buses seating 64 or more with 49-seaters surely means less comfort for some. However, the frequency here is to be retained, the saving in vehicles coming from shortening the route. No date has yet been set for the changeover, which involves several other routes. The straight-line nature of the 29 does make it more suitable than most for artics.

Currently, the 29 runs in two overlapping sections, Trafalgar Square-Wood Green and Camden Town-Palmers Green. It has suffered from overcrowding on the section across Camden Town, as has the 141 (London Bridge-Wood Green) south of Newington Green, and TfL put two different sets of proposals to the 'relevant authorities'. Both included withdrawing the 29 between Palmers Green and Wood Green, but the set not proceeded with would have retained double-deckers on an improved frequency.

Either way, the London Central-operated 21 (Lewisham-Finsbury Square) will be extended north from Finsbury Square to Newington Green via route 141 — in sharp contrast to the way cross-London routes have been split over recent decades — while the 141 will be extended from Wood Green to Palmers Green. The 329 (Turnpike Lane-Enfield Town), also won by Arriva on re-tender, will be slightly reduced in frequency, with the peak requirement falling from 17 to 15 buses.

Other Arriva London North successes are with routes 41/N41 (Archway-Tottenham Hale), 121 (Turnpike Lane-Enfield) and 141, all with existing double-deckers and unchanged PVRs of, respectively, 21, 19 and 23 buses, and the W4 (Ferry Lane Estate-Oakthorpe Park) with a mix of 11 new and existing single-deckers.

The only contract to change hands in this round of awards is the schooldays 699 (Winchmore Hill-Dame Alice Owen's School), which First Capital is taking over from Arriva Leaside Travel in November, using three of its existing double-deckers; Leaside uses three Metrobuses.

First Capital also retains school route 616 (Winchmore Hill-Edmonton Green) with one existing double-decker, plus the 299 (Muswell Hill-Cockfosters) and W10 (Enfield-Crews Hill station), with a joint PVR of six existing single-deckers, and the W6 (Southgate-Edmonton Green) with eight existing single-deckers.

Other awards in the same tender round — all involving existing vehicles — see CT Plus (originally Hackney Community Transport) retain the 153 (Finsbury Park-Liverpool Street) with nine (previously 10) single-deckers, and Metroline keep the W5 (Harringay-Archway) with seven single-deckers and the 52/N52 (Willesden-Victoria) with 28 double-deckers. Most of the new contracts take effect from next February.

Below: As reported last month, Bharat Travel route 805 (Northolt-Heathrow Airport Cargo Area) will be replaced by largely identical new First CentreWest-operated route 435 at a date yet to be announced. First will operate double-deckers in place of Bharat buses like Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF Y201 KNB. JOHN ALDRIDGE

MAJOR MAKEOVER FOR ARRIVA DAFs AND DARTS

A recent ride on an early example of an Arriva London DLA-class DAF DB250 double-decker took me by surprise, for the seats were in old-style pairs. Those old fashioned interiors won't last much longer because many of the latest tender rounds, although won with existing vehicles, require what experts tell me is about £20,000 refurbishment per bus.

An initial batch of 43 buses will be refurbished for routes 173 (Goodmayes-Beckton), 197 (currently Croydon-Norwood Junction, but to be extended to Peckham to replace part of the 312) and 243 (Wood Green-Waterloo).

Individual bucket-type seats will go upstairs, while downstairs the allegedly dangerous tip-up seats will come out, reducing those with 21 seats to 18 and those with 20 to 19. Many passengers find the tip-ups most useful when there are no wheelchairs or children in pushchairs on the buses. And I cannot help wondering about all those new (and refurbished) trains coming into service on Network Rail with tip-up seats.

Etched windows will be replaced, extra opening windows will be fitted in the upper deck, fire suppression equipment will be installed in the engine compartment, the headlights will be rewired to remain on whenever the engine is running, and their exteriors will be repainted.

A notable side effect is that some of Arriva London South's 1986/87 Leyland/ECW Olympians will soldier on at Norwood, covering indirectly while the DLAs are refurbished. Some of the Olympians have been repainted, while one has even gained a white roof. They are among the last Leylands in London, and will end a very long-standing association with the make.

Some of Arriva's relatively recent PDL-class Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers will also receive similar makeovers. They are for the 289 (Purley-Elmers End), recently won on re-tender, plus those for the shortened 312, which goes single-deck.

MAYOR'S HERITAGE RM 'ANNOUNCEMENT'

It looks like the new Routemaster-operated heritage routes could be running before the last 'proper' RM routes go over to low-floor buses.

In a couple of broadcast interviews, Mayor Ken Livingstone revealed that two routes are likely to start before the end of the year, one east-west across the central area, the other north-south. I'm told that Stagecoach, London General and Blue Triangle are all bidding to run them, probably using the Routemasters refurbished by Marshall Bus, most of which currently operate with London Sovereign on the 13. Starting dates around September/October are mooted.

Arriva will have the last two normal Routemaster routes. Expect articulated buses to take over the 38 on 29 October and new double-deckers to operate the 159 from around 3 December.

Right: BP Connect finally opened the new hydrogen filling station for First's three fuel-cell Mercedes-Benz Citaros on the A127 Southend Arterial Road near Romford on 10 May. Planning delays meant that it has taken three years for the facility to be built and opened. These Citaros, including ESQ64993 (LK53 MBV) seen here, currently operate riverside route RV1 in central London and can travel for 125 miles before refuelling. LEN RASON

MISLEADING ENGLISH AT SOME BUS STOPS

Some time ago, Transport for London stopped displaying days of operation or similar detail on bus stop flags — they're the small route numbers displayed on most bus stop signs these days. Not surprisingly, complaints by the London Transport Users Committee and many others persuaded TfL to reinstate them.

However, this has not been done on several stops (or routes). It is particularly misleading at stops served by more than one route not running on Sundays, when the number flag for one is appropriately marked while that on the other is not.

Something else I would take issue with is the strange phraseology on the timetables for such routes. It reads 'buses do not stop here on Sundays and other public holidays'. This surely suggests that the buses may stop somewhere else, perhaps just down the road. Why not a simple: 'there is no service on Sundays or bank holidays'?

Also in the spirit of being unhelpful is the notice displayed at stops between Croydon and Bromley previously served by the now withdrawn 726 and not served by the replacing X26. It is headed: 'Route 726 will no longer stop here'. Well, if it no longer exists that's not surprising. If you read on it does say that starting from . . . route 726 will no longer run. It then adds 'for more information and alternative travel options visit www . . . or phone . . .' Perhaps it's an admission that there aren't any reasonable alternatives.

NEW-STYLE COUNTDOWN ON THE WAY

It's been a couple of years since further routes were added to the so-called real-time Countdown displays at bus stops showing when the next bus on a route is likely to appear, and its destination.

The old technology system, which had reached breaking point, relies on beacons placed at intervals on the streets to pick up the presence of each passing bus. A parked high vehicle, for instance, could render the information inaccurate.

Now Siemens has won a 10-year, £120 million project — said to be the largest of its kind in the world — to put every route on the new satellite navigation system. Over the next four years, all London buses will be fitted with the new equipment.

While all this is going on it would be useful if a list could be displayed alongside all existing display panels saying which routes they cover. Often at one stop serving, say, five routes, only four will be on Countdown. The stranger wanting the fifth route may conclude it isn't running when it never comes up on the screen.

Centrebus took over Potters Bar local route PB1, previously operated by Metroline, on 7 May and is using new 7.8m Optare Solo SlimLine 381 (YJ05 XNB). MATTHEW WHARMBY

Below: Following the demise of the Wigan-built President body, Metroline's latest Alexander Dennis Tridents have Falkirk-built ALX400 bodies. This is TA639 (LK05 GFV) in Acton. MARK LYONS

SHORT HOPS

- **The summer Sunday** and bank holiday extension of route 267 (Hammersmith-Fulwell) to Hampton Court has been reinstated.

  It is the last remaining example of London's once-common seasonal weekend route extensions. The 215 (Walthamstow-Yardley Lane Estate) is extended daily to Lea Valley Camp Site until 9 September: this extension did not run last year.

- **A new version** of Transport for London's four area bus maps in April shows the route numbers of 24hr routes in light blue to make them more obvious. Mobility routes (those numbered in the 900s) are shown on the maps for the first time whereas previously they were listed, but not on the maps themselves.

- **Adshel** has won a new 10-year contract for advertising in London bus shelters.

- **Traffic congestion** in London on Saturday lunchtimes is now higher than between 17.00 and 19.00 on weekdays.

- **The penalty fare** for travelling without a ticket on London buses or the Underground is now £20.

- **London United** has been named Public Transport Operator of the Year, top prize in the 2005 London Transport Awards. Last year, it was Bus Operator of the Year.

Millar's Tales

THE EDITOR'S LATERAL VIEW OF BUS AND COACH EVENTS

Whatever happened to...? ...London Transport FRM1

A year ago, *Buses* set out to answer the question posed in the headline above. FRM1, the solitary rear-engined version of the London Routemaster — and the only rear-engined AEC double-decker — hasn't been seen in public this side of the millennium. Where was it? Why hadn't it been out and about?

A visit to the London's Transport Museum resource centre at Acton confirmed that it was alive and almost in one piece. Almost, because the one piece not in the right place was the lower front panel with its registration number. Clearly, its previous journey had been undertaken on tow.

Bob Bird, the museum's road and rail curator, explained that a pump driving the engine cooling fans had failed after an open day at Leyton in the late-1990s. The interesting thing for the museum is that the breakdown bore out some of the research London Transport undertook with the bus in the 1960s. It reinforced that had there ever been an FRM2, it would have had a more robust set of pumps. This one had been adapted from those used to work the power steering on standards RMs.

We were promised, however, that a suitable substitute pump had been found and that FRM1 would be back on the road for the Routemaster 50 weekend in July. As the accompanying picture proves, this was one promise the museum fulfilled (it didn't manage to get green RM2 done on time). And it had the old girl back in service on route 73 on 3 September, the so-called 'Black Friday' when RMs came off that route, as well as the 9 and 390.

A GENERATION GAME

Family businesses usually give up commemorating more than the first and second generations. However, I was pleased to receive these pictures from Fred York, proving that, at Emsworth & District, the Lea family has added the first grandchild to the roll of honour on the back of at least one Van Hool.

A MODEL WEDDING COACH

When you make your living by selling diecast model buses, you can surely afford to indulge yourself if your daughter gets married. Frank Joyce of Exclusive First Editions did just that on 14 May, by arranging for the Cobham Bus Museum to provide the magnificent 1938 Green Line 10T10 AEC Regal coach T504 to transport guests through Epping Forest to St Peter's-in-the-Forest church, where his beloved Dianne tied the knot.

As EFE also sells a 1/76th-scale 10T10 model, what else could Frank do but have 144 of them customised with the name of the church and the date printed on the destination blind as a memento for the wedding guests? There weren't quite that many guests, so two of these collectors' items will be given to EFE subscribers in a prize draw.

BIRDBOX OF THE MONTH

This month's Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model — and my congratulations — go to Vince Halls of Suffolk for snapping this one-time Crosville Bristol VR with supplementary accommodation.

He found it in a car park while his wife was pricing dolls houses for sale in Benfleet, Essex and tells me that the blocks strung around both decks are sponges fixed with netting to cushion the blow of colliding birds. And why birds? Because the three objects around the advertisement panels are nesting boxes.

Keep your eyes open and camera at the ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the usual address. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

For further information on Corgi, visit the website at www.corgiclassics.com or for details of your local stockist, call Corgi customer services on 0845 603 9070.

WRITE DIRECT TO MILLAR'S TALES

Please send any stories, photos (prints or slides), cuttings and other information on off-beat bus matters direct to: ***Buses*** **PO Box 3759, Glasgow, G41 5YN**

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE DAY

Never underrate the knowledge of the bus passenger. And certainly don't question the powers of old ladies' observation. If I doubted either of those statements before, I was certain of them the other day after eavesdropping on a conversation while awaiting a First 59 in Glasgow city centre.

Back in the mists of time when this was a No.3 tram and influential politicians lived on the route, Glasgow Corporation operated it with its newest tramcars. It rarely put new buses on it, though, and First Glasgow leavens a regular supply of Volvo Citybuses and ex-First Capital Dennis Dominators with the occasional seatbelted Ailsa now into the early years of its third decade.

I thought I was among the afflicted few who could recognise any of these long before the route number became clear, but I was underrating these bus-seasoned matrons. As low-floor single and double-deckers on other routes presented themselves on the horizon, they soon agreed that they couldn't be 59s. 'They're too new for us,' said one, or words to that effect. If you thought only *Buses* readers could tell a Gemini from a Palatine, this pair also knew the difference between a Wright and a Right Wreck.

For, only a minute or two before her Citybus turned up (unable to reach the kerb) and she hauled herself and shopping from street level to high floor in a manner she clearly had practised many times before, she summed up the state of these euphemistically 'mid-life' Volvos and Dennises. 'They make that many bumps and bangs, we're lucky if they get us home without the bottom falling out.'

ENQUIRE WITHIN

National Welsh, MK and York

The last of Myles Chantler's queries about bus operators (March and May 'Tales') are about four former National Bus Company subsidiaries.

National Welsh was formed in April 1978 when Western Welsh and Red & White merged. It was sold to its management in May 1987, which sold the Red & White operations to Western Travel (then owner of Cheltenham & Gloucester) in January 1991.

A year later, National Welsh went into receivership and was broken up. Rhondda Bus (which eventually was part owned by Stagecoach, First and British Bus as well as by industry entrepreneur Julian Peddle) took over some of it. A series of deals ended up with Red & White taking over other parts around Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil. Stagecoach bought Western Travel in December 1993 and Rhondda four years later.

South Wales Transport management bought their company in May 1987, acquired Brewer's of Caerau in January 1988 and sold out to Badgerline in February 1990.

NBC sold Milton Keynes City Bus to its management in August 1987. In turn, they sold out to Cambus Holdings in November 1992 and Cambus sold out to Stagecoach in December 1995.

To satisfy the competition authorities, Stagecoach sold the Milton Keynes business and the United Counties depot at Huntingdon to Julian Peddle in March 1997; these traded respectively as MK Metro and Premier Buses. Julian Peddle still owns MK Metro, but sold Premier to Blazefield Holdings in February 1998. Blazefield rebranded it as Huntingdon & District and sold it to Cavalier Contracts in November 2003.

He asks about the past history of First York. It used to be part of West Yorkshire Road Car, which Alan Stephenson's AJS group bought in August 1987. AJS split WYRC into three subsidiaries about a year later, one of them York City & District, which it sold (renamed Rider York) to Yorkshire Rider in July 1990. Badgerline bought Rider Group in April 1994 and merged with the GRT group 13 months later to form First.

Right: Milton Keynes City Bus bought 92 Mercedes-Benz L608D midibuses in 1986, including 23 (D123 VRP) converted by Robin Hood.

HERE IS BRIGHT VAN MAN

As some of you may know, there's a long tradition of manufacturers' badges beginning life on fronts and backs of buses and ending up embellishing fitters' toolboxes. It seems that a few are also appearing on operators' vans.

Steve Powell caught up with one of Cardiff Bus's Peugeot Expert vans with an additional badge suggesting deep knowledge of the products of a bus plant in Guildford. The other, on a Renault Trafic of Newbury-based Weavaway, raises more questions. As John Marsh's picture shows, a strategic black bolt has turned registration V11 OOL into something more recognisable in the coach world. And is the corporately-styled 'Van Hooligans' lettering on the other door (and on the sides of the van) a wicked slur on the van drivers' skills or is this the punishment bus for schoolchildren deemed too unruly to ride in the company's new tri-axle Volvo double-deckers?

Somehow, I imagine I may have tapped into a new picture stream from you.

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YN05 VSF — in CIÉ Tours International livery for mainland British work — is one of a dozen 12.8m Plaxton Paragon-bodied Volvo B12Ms for Logan's of Dunloy. Although Plaxton has built other 12.8m Paragons, these are the first without wheelchair lifts.

Respect is Plaxton's key word

One year after they bought the UK's only volume coach manufacturer, Plaxton's owner managers are venturing back into buses, but they insist that they will never neglect their core market

As it prepares to re-enter the mainstream bus market later this year, it's worth remembering that as recently as 2001, Plaxton was on the edge of an abyss. Britain's last full-size luxury coach manufacturer seemed destined to disappear as TransBus International announced plans to close its Scarborough factory. It would transfer Pointer bus production to Falkirk and either import coaches from eastern Europe or bail out of the coach market altogether.

TransBus, truth be told, was far more interested in and comfortable with buses than coaches, which it didn't understand and from which it apparently wasn't making a penny in profit.

Diversifying into building buses 10 years earlier may have greatly increased production at Scarborough, but it masked the factory's inefficiencies in coach manufacturing.

Within weeks — in what many believe was its most inspired move over its all-too-brief life — TransBus hit on Plan B. To turn Scarborough into a small-scale plant focused on building lower volumes of high-quality coaches. It vacated most of the buildings on the sprawling Eastfield site on the edge of town — it's called Plaxton Park these days — and transferred a bright young Glaswegian called Brian Davidson from Alexander's at Falkirk to manage what it called this 'centre of excellence'.

Brian Davidson spent 10 years with British Aerospace at Prestwick (the old Scottish Aviation business) before joining Alexander's. He wasn't the first to make that move. In 1948, Alexander's gained access to aluminium alloy technology when it recruited William Howgate as chief engineer from Scottish Aviation, which was dabbling briefly in the bus market.

TransBus was on a rollercoaster ride and while Brian Davidson and his team very quickly transformed the fortunes — and customers' perceptions — of the coachbuilding business, the company as a whole was in trouble, with tensions and rivalries between some of its senior managers. And financially, they were pushing water uphill as the parent Mayflower Corporation struggled to service its debts.

Left: The new Centro bus body is being developed from the Bus2000 project axed by TransBus. One of the three Volvo B6BLE-based Bus 2000 prototypes, NK54 PHV, has been on loan to Weardale Motor Services while one of its DAFs undergoes heavy accident repairs. GARRY LUCK

Exasperated by the way things were going, Brian Davidson left to pursue a career away from buses and coaches, but by the autumn of 2003 had been wooed back to take on another senior post at TransBus. By then, the roof was about to fall in and he was looking at management buyout opportunities even before TransBus collapsed into administration in March 2004. On 15 May last year, he — as chief executive — managing director Mike Keaney, sales director Kevin Wood and finance director Julie Globe saw off potential foreign competition to buy the coach division as a going concern for £15 million.

TransBus had done its utmost to stamp out the acquired brand names, but Plaxton — which enjoyed a degree of autonomy and remained profitable right through the six weeks of administration — resisted the corporate identity. Regardless of what head office said, its coaches continued to appear with chrome rear numberplate mouldings bearing the Plaxton name.

The new owners called their company Plaxton Ltd and adopted a new version of the old Scarborough Castle logo. With backing from venture capital company Aberdeen Murray Johnstone, they bought the Scarborough coach plant along with the dealership, minibus assembly plant, parts and repair facilities at Anston, South Yorkshire and Bus & Coach Glazing, an all-makes glass replacement business.

Rights to the bus design

They didn't make anything of it at the time, but they also bought the intellectual property rights to Bus2000, the body that Plaxton had begun developing in August 1998 to replace the Pointer. Although prototypes were built on Volvo B6BLE-based chassis, it was killed off after TransBus was formed two years later, but lived on for former owner Henlys' Blue Bird subsidiary as a lighter weight transit bus for North America. Around 70 were built on part of the Scarborough site before production transferred to the United States.

The range they acquired included the Mercedes-Benz Vario-based Beaver 2 bus. But if a return to 'proper' bus building was always an early priority — and many at Scarborough believe this was an activity robbed of them for their former owner's corporate goals — it wasn't the first one. That was to rebuild any bridges in the coach market that had been damaged in the TransBus implosion.

And as it moves back into buses, Plaxton is making clear that this must never compromise the gains it has made in its core market. This will be an add-on activity that might never be any bigger than the coach operation. One of the strongest messages it is sending to the bus market is that it will apply the customer focus of the coach business to the new Centro bus range.

The coach business is primarily about what the Americans call 'momma and poppa' family businesses, small operators buying one or two coaches a year, and Scarborough is geared to meeting their precise

Above: A stainless steel-framed body for National Express work being built on a Volvo B12B chassis. Plaxton minimises production costs by having parts delivered to the line-side in time for each coach to be built.

Above: Production of the Cheetah midicoach transferred from Anston to Scarborough last year when the Pronto was launched. Now it's going back to Anston.

requirements. The Plaxton people are far too polite to say so explicitly, but others will contrast that with the culture at Alexander Dennis, where Pointers are built in a plant more familiar with big volumes of standard vehicles for large fleets.

Respect and modesty

Bus and coach production will be kept quite separate with only a shared paint facility. The term Plaxton production people use is that they won't contaminate each other. That isn't an inappropriate expression, for the company needs to ensure that aluminium-framed bus parts and steel-framed coach structures are kept apart. It is already rigorous in keeping jigs and fixtures for mild steel Profile and stainless steel Panther/Paragon products apart until the final stages of completion. It also keeps untreated coaches indoors out of the sea air, another big difference from the bad old days.

The word Brian Davidson — maybe echoing the prime minister's post-general election mood — uses to describe the Plaxton ethos is 'respect'. 'As an organisation, we respect our customers, our employees and our suppliers,' he says. To that can be added modesty, for the company has been astute in not making extravagant claims. As a result, it has been able to exceed its customers' expectations of what it will achieve.

That same modesty holds it back from saying exactly where it is positioning itself in the coach market, but over the past four years the Plaxton brand has become one that operators apparently aspire to buy rather than choose because it is cheaper or just because it is British — as certainly used to be the case.

Recent conquest sales show it is gaining ground. Four Panther-bodied Volvo B12Bs for Ulsterbus — with the manufacturer's first-

ever power-operated side locker doors — take Plaxton back into a fleet that turned to Irizar and Caetano in recent years. A batch of B12Bs for Anderson's of London, sold in part exchange for Setras, takes it into one that previously believed quality only came with Continental integrals.

These sales, and a landmark order from Northern Ireland-based Logan's of Dunloy for the first dozen 12.8m B12M-based Paragon touring coaches, sit alongside big fleet orders from Shearings/Wallace Arnold (ten B12Ms), Stagecoach (20 Profile-bodied B7Rs sold in exchange for B10M/ Premieres), First (24 B7R/Profiles with wheelchair lifts) and National Express coaches for Yorkshire Traction, Tellings-Golden Miller and Dunn-Line. Production splits 50/50 between Panther/Paragon and Profile.

If Plaxton is no longer the supplier of last resort or misplaced patriotism, does it aspire to be the Rolex watch or BMW car of the coach world? If Brian Davidson was the fictional politician Francis Urquhart, it's a fair bet that he would say: 'I cannot possibly comment, but you may wish to say so.' His colleague Mike Keaney — who drives one of the Bavarian motor cars — says: 'We believe the comparison with BMW would be fair — on service, quality and focus. If we could match that, we would be pleased.'

The bus manufacturer Brian Davidson most identifies with is the Wright Group, whose spectacular growth over the past 15 years has been achieved by a combination of customer focus, attention to detail, aftersales support and a deep respect for the needs and welfare of its employees. Wright bodies are by no means the cheapest on the market. And some of Wright's people also came from the aerospace industry.

'I've had quite a few letters and phone calls of thanks from customers for getting things right,' says Brian Davidson. 'It's the quality of detail that makes the difference. I put that down to our processes and attention to detail.' He insists that Plaxton's quality of finish (especially of toilet compartments and locker doors) stands favourable comparison with some of its Continental competitors. 'We buy the best. We don't skimp in what we buy. We tend to go to leading suppliers.'

All of which has helped the newly independent Plaxton exceed its financial targets in its first year. It's not revealing the figures, but says it has emerged with a strong balance sheet. In terms of volume, it built 250 full-size coaches, 100 Beaver midibuses, 101 Cheetah midicoaches and 24 Pronto minibuses. The Mercedes Sprinter-based Pronto's figures suffered more than any other from the TransBus collapse, as it was launched a matter of weeks before the administrators were sent in.

Plaxton reckons its share of the full-size civilian coach market is up from 24 to 27%. The 250 include Profile-bodied Alexander Dennis Javelins for Lex, which operates them on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, but the 27% doesn't include the Lex coaches.

For next year, it's aiming to sell 280 full-size coaches, helped by the addition of MAN to its chassis partners and such other

Above: The Panther-bodied Volvo B12Bs for Ulsterbus Tours are the first Plaxtons with power-operated side luggage lockers. They have single locker panels, whereas manual lockers have three offside and three nearside panels.

incremental products as the 10m Javelin. Recent performance suggests it has a fair chance of exceeding that target. It's also projecting sales of 260 Beavers, Cheetahs and Prontos. This growth will allow it to transfer Cheetah production back to Anston, leaving Scarborough to build only full-size vehicles in its coach plant.

Aftermarket first, export market later

So how about taking Plaxton's new found quality into mainland Europe? After all, the company tried that a few times in the 1980s and early 1990s with no sustained success. Clearly — and perhaps wisely — this isn't a priority. 'You can look at UK manufacturers trying to foist UK products on European customers,' says Brian Davidson. 'Suffice to say, we don't foist our product on anybody. If we went overseas, we would need to regard ourselves as European. That is down the road for these reasons. There is potential for organic growth initially in the UK, then potentially for overseas sales.'

Plaxton's immediate priorities are to strengthen its aftermarket support. The TransBus break-up left it with only one parts distribution centre, at Anston. It opened a new facility at Motherwell to fill the gap left by the loss to Alexander Dennis of the site at Barrhead, which began life as Duple's Scottish parts centre. Another is to be established in Harlow to support the London bus market; it similarly replaces the now Alexander Dennis Ware depot, once the Thurgood coachworks, which Plaxton bought in 1963.

Brian Davidson says three depots are more than enough to support the coach market, especially as coach parts specialists staff them. These people, he says, have not only exceeded expectations in parts sales, but have ensured that 90% of parts can be supplied as soon as they are ordered. 'We've got coach people dealing with coach customers. They've done it. All we've done is supply the systems and given them the freedom of expression.' It's investing £120,000 in upgrading IT systems to help improve its aftermarket service.

By contrast, Bus & Coach Glazing operates in a market with much more local requirements. If windows are broken, they need to be replaced speedily and while the three parts depots can provide some of the coverage needed, Plaxton recognises that it needs more. In its first year, the priority was to regain customers who went elsewhere for glass after TransBus collapsed.

A third arm of the aftermarket business manages the workshops at Anston and Scarborough, which specialise in complex accident repairs and conversion work like refitting coach shells for fire brigades and National Health Service trusts. They also have been retrofitting side lifts for wheelchairs into coaches and have repainted several Shearings vehicles into that operator's 2005 season livery. Two contracts for Stagecoach saw it rebuild ex-Hong Kong Leyland Olympians for Megabus.com duties and convert six Routemasters to open-top for the Coach Canada fleet.

Even more quality

Mike Keaney says the priority for 2005/06 is to build on the past year's achievements. 'We are now looking at taking complete quality on to an even higher level — in the aftermarket, with a customer management system and providing more information to our suppliers. We're looking at how we specify vehicles, at lead times, at the right cost, at a different level of quality.'

It also is determined to create additional jobs, which is no mean achievement given the overall decline in British manufacturing. It recruited 20 people over the past year, taking the total workforce to 430, of whom almost 300 are at Scarborough and all of whom have signed up to a two-year pay deal. As bus production builds up, it's planning to add another 50 employees over the next year, some of them for its apprenticeship scheme.

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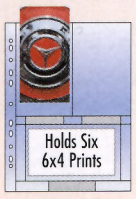

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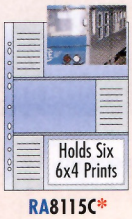

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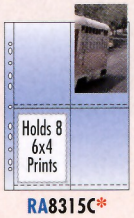

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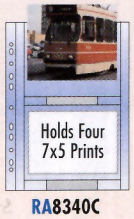

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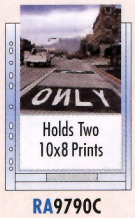

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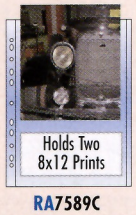

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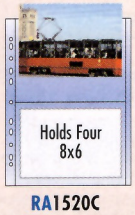

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Stagecoach — one of the three largest UK bus groups — celebrates its silver jubilee this year.

In 1980, this was a small family-owned coach company trying its hand in the newly deregulated long-distance express market. Today, it is a multi-million pound City-listed group with over 7,000 buses operating from the north of Scotland to Plymouth and Dover. It also runs buses in New Zealand and North America, trains and trams in Britain and ferries in New Zealand.

Over the intervening 25 years, it has frequently made the headlines through innovative and sometimes controversial deals and developments. And its quest for international expansion has seen it buy and sell bus companies in Africa, Hong Kong, China, Sweden, Portugal and Australia.

One of Britain's top bus writers, Doug Jack, has been given unrivalled access to Stagecoach's top management to research a definitive history of the company, which he has illustrated with an extensive selection of colour photographs.

This brand new book will sell for £16.99, but we're offering **SIX** as prizes in this month's easy-to-enter competition. Not only that, but they will be autographed by the author, something you can't buy in the shops. All you need to do is send in the correct answers to the three questions below about Stagecoach to arrive no later than **Friday 29 July**. We will announce the **SIX** winners in September *Buses*.

Picture by JOHN YOUNG

QUESTIONS

1) Where are the Stagecoach headquarters?

❑ PERTH ❑ PORTH ❑ FORTH

2) What is the name of Stagecoach's London-Oxford route?

❑ Oxford Metro ❑ Oxford Flyer ❑ Oxford Tube

3) In which of these former National Bus Company fleets did Stagecoach run green Routemasters?

❑ United Auto ❑ United Counties ❑ United Welsh

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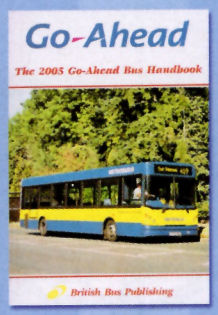

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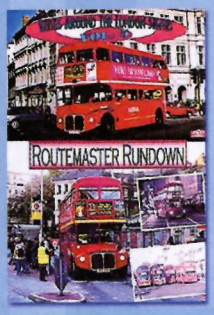

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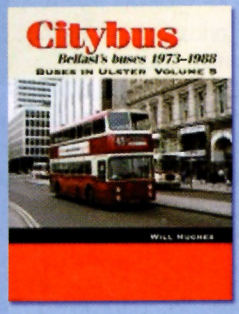

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On the Net

RICHARD DELAHOY used his recent trip to Scotland to put Lothian Buses' website to the test

In my May column I described my plans to visit the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's 10th anniversary running day on 15 May. So did it all go to plan and did the Internet help get me there — and home again — on time? Thankfully, I can say 'yes' on both counts, although I never did get to use Stagecoach's Yellow Taxibus. Indeed, I didn't even see one during my weekend in Edinburgh and Dunfermline.

Last time, I explained how the 'net had allowed me to plan the various stages of my journey and book flights and accommodation, all from the comfort of my study. What the 'net didn't tell me was that roadworks on the Forth Bridge could potentially cause major delays for Edinburgh-bound buses on the Sunday afternoon. Happily, two *Buses* readers did, in response to my column. Armed with that warning, it was a simple matter to check train times instead at **nrekb.nationalrail.co.uk** (no 'www' needed for this address).

Navigating a route through Edinburgh

Planning my day out in Edinburgh before the rally was a little more problematical. I wanted to sample Lothian's operations, so the obvious starting place was **www.lothianbuses.co.uk** This offers an attractive and uncluttered front page, but perhaps a little too uncluttered, as I found some of the navigation a bit confusing.

The menu bar across the top allows you to select a specific service number (now including the airport service 100, someone having perhaps taken note of my comments two months ago), to enter a street name or to choose from a selection: Tickets, News, Directory, How to, Travelshops, Other services, Edinburgh bus tours, Contact us and Careers.

I just wanted to get my bearings and was looking for a map, which does exist (and is pretty good) but isn't obvious. Browsing the menu choices revealed that 'How to' leads to 'Find a route' and an interactive map appears.

At first, it looks a bit daunting, but enlarging the map and reading the instructions reveals that you can click on each route number on the map to bring up the timetable. Clicking on the route number on the list to the right of the screen highlights the route in question. It is a trifle hard to see at first, but by repeatedly clicking on the number, you soon spot the route's coloured line flashing on and off.

Maps can be printed on A4

The city centre is covered by an enlargement, linked to the main map via a series of lettered gateway points. I'm not overly keen on this style but it works well enough. The maps can also be printed and will fit on to A4 paper (remember to set your printer to landscape first), but it is a challenge to fit the entire network legibly on to one sheet. I still have a conventional map from an earlier visit and that is at the opposite extreme — so large at 4ft wide by 3ft deep that I can barely hold it, let alone open it out on a busy street corner. The night bus network, incidentally, has its own separate map with a printer un-friendly black background, accessed via the 'Other services' heading.

The section on tickets is commendably clear, with sections on cash fares, day rovers, seasons and so on and includes the facility to buy tickets on-line. Two minor comments: the day rover page fails to mention that buses are exact fare only with fareboxes, and the ticket I needed — a single from the airport on the express bus combined with a day rover (AirSaver - £4.20) — isn't mentioned at all.

Lothian tells me it is not promoting it because 'the product may have a short shelf life' pending introduction of smartcard technology (though I'm not sure how a smartcard will be of use to a casual visitor). This misses the point that a website can easily be updated as soon as a ticket type changes, whereas paper publicity is harder to keep fully up-to-date.

Still, these are relatively minor niggles and armed with my printed map and an AirSaver, I was able to try out the impressive Broomhouse guided busway, as the photo shows. Now all I need to find on the 'net is a site devoted specifically to guided busways worldwide. Some look at individual systems, and there are some pages from the anti-busways lobby, but I couldn't find a single resource that brought together information from around the world. Do you know of one? I'd be happy to contribute pictures of the Tracline 65 system in Birmingham. Was it really 21 years ago that that pioneering system opened?

Thanks this month to Ian Ingram and Chris Moorey for their help. As usual, links to this month's featured sites are available at **http://efe.showbus.com/web** *and I can be contacted at* **buses@signal-training.com**

Below: Two services use Edinburgh's 1.5km guided busway, single-deck operated 22 and the 2, with Dennis Trident/Plaxton President double deckers like 622 (SN51 AYF). RICHARD DELAHOY

On the brink of change

ALAN MILLAR visits council-owned Newport Transport, where tradition co-exists with new ideas and one of the country's most modern bus fleets

Above: One of the six newest Scania OmniCity single-deckers, 41 (YN54 AOA), approaching the central bus station. STEVE MASKELL

The 47-year-old Leyland PD2 parked under an awning in Newport Transport's Corporation Road depot makes a stark contrast with this council-owned company's active fleet. It is happy to keep the PD2/40 — with rare Bristol-built Longwell Green body — for special events, but the average age of its 80 other buses is just 5.4 years, with 18 low-floor Scania OmniCity single-deckers and seven pioneering S-Kool yellow schoolbuses performing its highest profile work.

On the other hand, this modern fleet operates out of a depot with fixtures, fittings and rails dating back to the tramway age, which ended here in 1937. And those buses — with LED destination displays and the latest generation of Wayfarer ticket machines — will be brush rather than spray painted every three years. Damaged body panels will be replaced by sheet metal cut to fit for as long as skilled craftsmen can be recruited.

As much as such things can be guaranteed, this company looks likely to survive in council ownership. Two thirds of Newport's 47 councillors are Labour members, four of whom sit on the company's board. A former councillor is chairman, while the other eight board members are the four executive directors, an employee director, a strategic director from the council and two non-executives — the head of the city's Chamber of Commerce and Thomas

Left: 178 (PDW 484), the Longwell Green-bodied Leyland Titan PD2/40 that Newport Transport keeps for special events.

Right: Irizar-bodied Scania S-Kool yellow schoolbus 22 (YN54 OCD) at the end of a day's duties.

Knowles, former managing director at Lancaster City Transport.

Relatively low income and car ownership levels mean this remains good bus territory, but Newport is changing. It gained city status two years ago for the Queen's golden jubilee and has redevelopment plans to support new employment to replace jobs lost when Corus closed the huge Llanwern steel works.

The company's managing director, Trevor Roberts, bridges the divide between tradition and progress. Like Blazefield's Giles Fearnley, he comes from a dynasty of bus managers. His paternal grandfather was Captain Edward Roberts, deputy general manager at Crosville and one of the architects of that company's growth in the 1920s and 1930s. His maternal grandfather was works manager at Eastern Counties, where his mother was a directors' secretary. His father, Richard, became National Bus Company regional director for Wales and the Marches. His Uncle Ralph was regional director North. And an aunt worked for Ribble.

Left: Trevor Roberts, Newport Transport managing director.

When he left school 31 years ago, he became a company trainee with Crosville at Caernarfon and within two years he was depot superintendent at Flint, before joining the legendary NBC senior management training scheme. He was one of 13 in his year. Eleven were university graduates; his fellow industry colleague was Neil Renilson, now chief executive at Lothian Buses — the largest surviving municipal.

His NBC career took him to Eastern Counties, Ribble and back to the 'family firm' as Crosville's Wrexham divisional manager. With privatisation looming and Crosville being split in two, he moved into the local authority sector as traffic manager — later operations director — at Rossendale Transport. He served later as Wigan depot manager with Greater Manchester Buses until redundancy propelled him briefly into Lancashire County Council.

After two months, he leaped at the chance to become operations director with Stagecoach Ribble then transferred to Bluebird at Aberdeen when his fellow NBC trainee Neil Renilson was Stagecoach's 'Mr Scotland'. A move to First's East Scotland operation followed, as managing director of what then was its Central & Borders business. He fell foul of the revolving door that has terminated the brief careers of several incumbents in that role and took on the Newport job on the retirement of previous MD Edwin Marsh in 2001.

New profit centres

His first priority was to stabilise the finances of a company that made just £84,000 profit before tax on £7.3 million turnover in 2002, then around £365,000 in each of the next two years before sharp increases in fuel and insurance costs pushed last year's bottom line to £190,000 on £8 million turnover — a margin of 2.4%. The council — as sole shareholder — sets a 5% target to maintain the network and keep the fleet up-to-date.

Buses — this part of the business has adopted a new 'Newport Bus' fleetname without the coat of arms — aren't the whole story. A quarter of turnover comes from other activities, primarily a five-year contract to maintain 800 pieces of plant and equipment for the city council — everything from dustcarts, snowploughs and social service vans to pavement sweepers and grass cutters. Part of the depot is set aside for this work, with its own staff and building. The council contract also provides the foundation for an MoT testing and car repair business.

The driving school is another profit centre, with its own buses and lorries and contracts with Newport & Gwent Enterprise, the police and others to provide practical and theoretical training.

City centre developments

The city bus network is 95% commercial, with cross-subsidy helping preserve services before and after the main working day. Several routes split into clockwise and anti-clockwise loops at their outer ends, an arrangement that habitual passengers seem to prefer to the option of a more frequent service in one direction.

This has been a flat fare 'no change' operation since the early 1970s and today the standard adult fare within the city is 95p. Until September last year it was 90p, and although a rise to £1 was rejected then as too steep, the company suspects that many passengers pay £1 anyway and accept they won't get change. There also are £2.50 day rover tickets and £1.75 tickets valid either for a return journey or as transfers between two connecting journeys. The transfer facility is particularly appropriate as all routes terminate in the city's large central bus station.

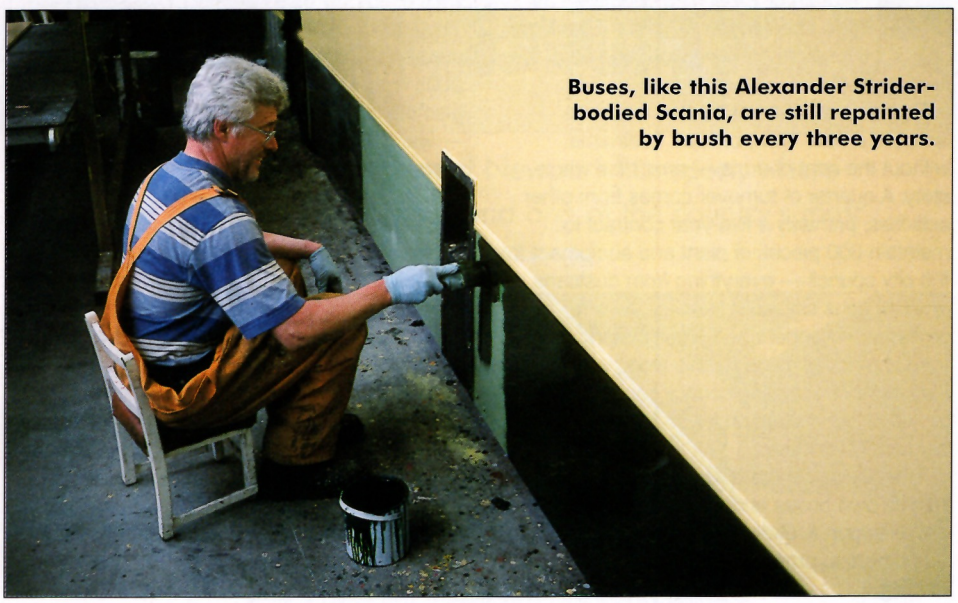
A citywide transport strategy proposes cross-city routes, but Trevor Roberts remains to be convinced that they will work. As he points out, Nottingham City Transport improved reliability and increased ridership by scrapping cross-city links used only by a minority of passengers. The Newport plan would use bus priorities to support the cross-city routes, but the reality in 2005 is that the city council — remember it's also the sole shareholder in Newport Transport — wants to open bus lanes to cars outside the morning and evening peaks.

The city transport strategy also calls for a bus/rail interchange. This, too, is under threat as the regeneration company owned by the city council, the Welsh Assembly government and the Welsh Development Agency is proposing an entirely different solution. To make space for signature shopping developments, the 31-stand central bus station would be replaced by one of half its size, with city services moved on to a 'bus box', a central loop that wouldn't take them any nearer the railway station than they go today.

The ambience of the bus station has little to commend it, but the alternative on offer could undermine its operational benefits. Besides its 31 stands, it also has a generous parking area, which Newport Transport uses for extra buses that can be pressed into service to avoid cancelling journeys when inbound buses are delayed. At a pinch, it could park those half dozen buses at the Corporation Road depot, almost directly opposite the bus station on the other side of the River Usk, but it too is earmarked for more urban regeneration. A replacement has been located where a Standard Cables factory used to be, about a mile farther out of town.

That site is too far out for 'fire fighting' extra buses, but otherwise Trevor Roberts says it's ideal for the company's requirements. He aims to make the move within three to five years, when the Corporation Road site — which Newport Transport owns — should have reached its optimum market value. Already, he has contacted the architects who designed Thamesdown Transport's new Swindon depot and has commissioned something similar, but with extra room to accommodate the council maintenance contract.

Above: **The Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Tridents wear overall advertising liveries. Here, 38 (V38 HTG) enters Cardiff bus station on the joint service between the two cities.** **SWANSWELL**



Buses, like this Alexander Strider-bodied Scania, are still repainted by brush every three years.

The S-Kool experiment

The big development of the past year was the introduction of the seven Irizar-bodied Scania S-Kool yellow schoolbuses. Unlike many operators, Newport kept running schoolbuses when services were deregulated 19 years ago. And until it picked up a council contract last Christmas following 2 Travel's withdrawal from the area, all this work has been run commercially as registered bus services.

It ran most with Scania N113 double-deckers, but had more than its fair share of problems with rowdy children. In the worst incident, a boy was pushed out of an upper-deck emergency door. The problem was most acute on two routes. 'I drove one of them,' says Trevor Roberts. 'You couldn't drive safely with the kids' behaviour. So it was a case of stop operating commercial schools services or find an alternative.'

Newport is Scania's longest established UK bus customer, since it bought 44 Metro-Scania single-deckers over 30 years ago. It was a loyal buyer in the lean years of the early 1980s when Scania struggled to compete against British-built products. Even so, it was by no means a done deal that the yellow schoolbuses would be Scanias. Trevor Roberts looked seriously at the Irisbus Scolabus, which was launched in 2001 with a 'buy and try' option that allowed customers to return the vehicles if they didn't work out. Before talks got any farther, Coach Europe — the Irisbus dealer — went bust and Newport returned to Scania.

It also involved Pat Harris of the Belt Up School Kids (Busk) pressure group that's been campaigning for safer schoolbuses. She lives in Newport and Trevor Roberts is typically frank in explaining his motives. 'I would rather include her from the start than have her chipping in after the event.' Their deliberations resulted in S-Kool, a high capacity, fully seatbelted vehicle based on the Irizar Intercentury-bodied Scania K94IB. The first vehicle was delivered in May last year, the other six last Christmas — before wheelchair accessibility became mandatory. Only six are required, but having raised its standards, Newport Transport cannot afford to substitute a regular service bus for an S-Kool if a problem arises.

Trevor Roberts describes the whole operation as a partnership between the operator, its employees, the vehicle manufacturers, Busk and three secondary schools. The children using the service — and their parents — sign up to behavioral undertakings and, so far, life on the schoolbuses has been a dramatic improvement.

It works partly because the schools are on staggered hours, so each 70-seat S-Kool can carry up to 140 children on two runs each way each day. A £6 weekly ticket also provides free weekend travel on the company's regular bus services. If the buses run full, each one should bring in £160 revenue per day. The company wants £200, so is promoting their availability for inter-peak private hires to schools for baths runs and trips out.

Trevor Roberts says he has three fallback options if they miss that target. One is to turn them into ordinary coaches. Another is to use them for conventional school contracts. The third is to lease them to other local authorities or operate them on behalf of another authority. He argues there can be wider benefits in pursuing some business ventures. The kudos and civic pride that has come from running an open-top summer tour for City Sightseeing — using an N113 double-decker converted in the company's workshops — far outweighs its slender profit margin.

The future is single-deck

School transport helps justify the retention of six Alexander-bodied Dennis Tridents delivered in 2000 when Scania didn't offer a low-floor double-decker. Three are used mainly on Newport's share of the 30 route to Cardiff run jointly with Cardiff Bus, and one carries schoolchildren on the Caerleon route. But come the day when Newport chooses to sell them, Trevor Roberts doesn't envisage buying any more double-deckers.

Newport has taken an articulated bus round its routes, but the roads in the 1960s estates couldn't accommodate them. So it would rather increase frequencies where capacity is an issue. It did that to accommodate apparent overloading following the introduction of the Welsh free concessionary travel scheme in 2002, albeit with mixed results. It increased frequencies on three routes from every 10min to every 7.5min or from 7.5min to 6min. But while one of these enhancements delivered a 6 to 7% ridership increase, inexplicably another serving a similar area on the opposite side of town had no effect at all and the service has since reverted to its old frequency.

Normally, Newport aims to replace six buses a year, but having added six OmniCitys and seven S-Kools last year, it is taking a breather and is still sizing up options to replace its oldest Optare MetroRider midibuses on Nipper-branded routes. Last time round, it bought Alexander-bodied Dennis Mini Darts. If Scania offered something practical, it's a fair bet that it might buy that.

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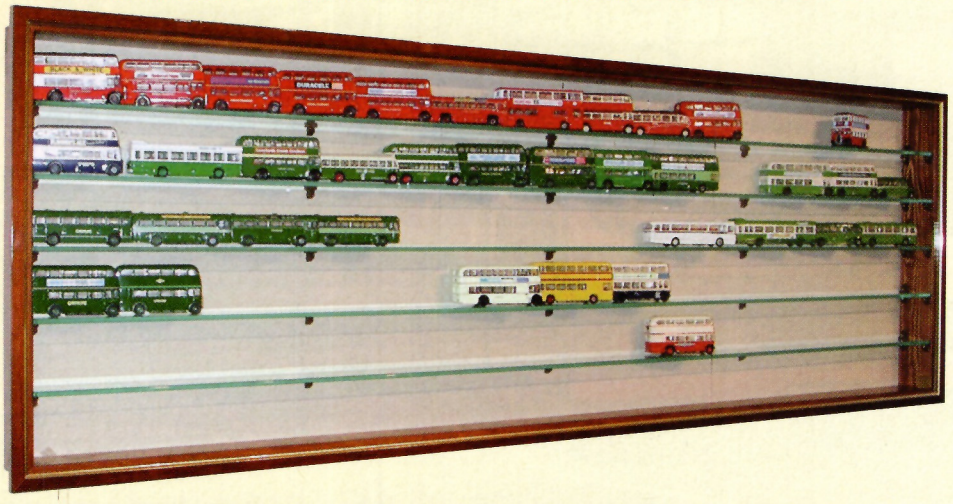

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Simplicity pays off

Wright Pathfinder-bodied Dennis Lance SLF 67321 (ODZ 8921) — new to CentreWest 11 years ago as one of London's first low-floor buses — on one of the upgraded Worcester city services. MARK LYONS

Once one of the sleepiest bits of the old Midland Red, First Wyvern is starting to grow again. ALAN MILLAR reports on it's achievements so far.

In the years before First started to apply a single livery style, First Wyvern — or First Midland Red if you prefer to go by what the legal lettering says on the sides of its vehicles — had the dubious honour of being the only group fleet without a proper Barbie bus to its name. The original sort, that is, with willow leaf motif and purple/green seats.

That was because its territory across rural Herefordshire and Worcestershire didn't justify even one low-floor bus with corporate interior. Just the four Caetano-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs leased for park-&-ride duties in Worcester and painted in colours chosen by the council.

The fact that there are rapidly increasing numbers of them today isn't just because the group has dropped the unnecessary distinction between buses in Barbie and secondary Barbie 2 liveries, but because this particular company's fortunes have changed. Ridership and profits are rising, and it's been taking delivery of substantial numbers of new, corporately liveried Alexander Dennis and Optare low-floor buses.

For the past four years, Wyvern has been part of the bigger First Midlands business, which also looks after the former municipal operations in Leicester and Northampton. Managing director of the lot is Ian Humphreys, a former National Bus Company traffic man who worked for West Yorkshire Road Car and Eastern National, later for Thamesway after the Badgerline takeover. After Badgerline and GRT came together to form First, he moved to the Midlands, ran Leicester and Northampton for two-and-a-half years before adding Wyvern to his responsibilities upon the retirement of ex-Midland Red man Ken Mills, who died very recently.

Frequency, fares and focus

His strategy has been to apply the lessons of the two East Midlands operations to this much less densely populated area. The population contrasts are notable, for while Leicester has 230,000 inhabitants and Northampton has 180,000, Wyvern's biggest centres are Redditch (90,000) and Worcester (85,000). Hereford and Worcester are cathedral cities, Redditch a West Midlands overspill new town. If there is one magic ingredient to be applied here — as in most First or other major operators' territories — it is simplicity. Overground-style colour-coded routes run at relatively high frequency with simple fares and prominent branding.

In Leicester, the most recent success story was on route 17, which Ian Humphreys says has delivered 'stunning growth' since it was converted to a bargain basement service with Dennis Falcons and a 50p flat fare. It helps that this route serves inner city communities where low income asylum seekers live, but the reason it offers lessons for Wyvern — and why First is looking at the prospects for similar services in other cities — is that it has proved that fare cuts can work. 'It took eight weeks for the volume of passengers to grow to give us back the revenue we needed,' he says.

Right: More typical of the old regime, Plaxton Verde-bodied step-entrance Lance 67248 (M248 MRW) — still in Midland Red West livery — climbs London Road, Worcester with the cathedral in the background. ALAN MILLAR

Right: Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 42356 (Y356 AUY), one of the quartet leased for Worcester park-&-ride. MARK LYONS

Before any such expansion could be contemplated, however, the Wyvern business had to go through a pain barrier of taking out 10% of the fleet and of its driving staff. Most driving jobs were axed as drivers left, but there were some redundancies.

The history of this business is that in December 1986, as Midland Red West, it was sold to its management in the seventh transaction of the National Bus Company privatisation. In September 1987, they bought Bristol City Line, a deal that made the combined business attractive to Badgerline, which bought it seven months later. Despite all these developments, Midland Red West seemed to trundle along in a late-1980s timewarp while the world around it changed dramatically. The fleet was dominated by Leyland Lynxes and small Mercedes-Benz minibuses, its fares scales were complex and its drivers were covered by pre-deregulation terms and conditions.

As he turned the business around, Ian Humphreys — a *Buses* reader, incidentally, since 1968 — worked closely with trades union representatives and staff to keep them informed of where things needed to go. He also worked with the local authorities to alert them to where it was giving up routes and steered them — where appropriate — to demand responsive transport solutions. That relationship has helped secure financial contributions from Herefordshire and Worcestershire of between 20 and 50% of the cost of some of First Wyvern's new vehicles. It also operates several local authority-owned buses on contracted services.

The job and fleet cuts came about as First gave up non-viable routes and supported services won with unacceptably low tender prices. The sort of routes given up included one between Evesham and Long Lartin, another between Kidderminster and Bromsgrove via small villages, as well as evening services and some Centro contracts in the West Midlands conurbation, routes it had continued even after the company's Birmingham depot closed in 1997/98.

'The Centro tendered services were barely adding up,' he says. 'My view is that if we could get more out of our existing area, we should do that rather than go farther afield.'

He questioned everything the company did, with simplification a constant goal. That took out such complexities as routes numbered 32F and 33D in Worcester. 'They seemed confusing to me, so they would be to the public,' he explains. His belief in simplification has been reinforced by another experience in Leicester, where route 74 gained 5% more traffic after it was relaunched with low-floor buses and coloured branding, and by taking out a dogleg diversion. 'Frequency rather than penetration is what counts,' he argues. 'As one of my colleagues said, the people who designed the first generation of tramways knew what they were doing.'

Left: Ian Humphreys in Evesham depot, with a Midland Red mirror designed to instill discipline in an earlier generation of drivers.

Over its first nine months, the Overground network in Worcester attracted 11% more passengers and 12% more revenue.

Fares simplification has cut FirstDay prices twice in Worcester — where bus travel was traditionally expensive — and interurban fares have been frozen since 2002. In Redditch, First has swept away an incredible 65 different ticket values, where adult fares are now a flat £1, a £1.50 day ticket and a £6.90 weekly.

More complicated in Redditch

The medicine prescribed for Redditch was more complicated than elsewhere. First's unacceptable starting point was that it was losing money in this overspill town with low-income residents, low car ownership and a bus friendly infrastructure that includes a bus-only 'track' serving the Matchborough district. Around 15% of the company's passengers rode the Matchborough Circles and, to hold on to that volume, it had offered some incredibly cheap tickets. The most extreme example of these was an eight-week Redditicket for £17. That's 43p per weekday.

'Perversely, in Redditch we had to do the opposite of elsewhere and remove tickets and artificially suppress demand for what was a social service,' says Ian Humphreys. He believes that the flat fare has won back lost traffic and that there is potential for further growth.

For other reasons, all Matchborough evening services after 20.00 were withdrawn in January 2003 because of persistent problems with anti-social behaviour. In the period before it took this drastic action, First logged 160 incidents including assaults, stone throwing and discharging of CS gas canisters. It may not have gone down well with law abiding bus passengers, but the cut has made it far easier to retain drivers at Redditch.

And although Pete's Travel — which in its new guise as People's Express still competes in Redditch — continued an evening service with council support, it has also abandoned them apparently for similar reasons. The council has since sought tenders to provide a taxibus service in the evenings.

First has new Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart and Enviro300 single-deckers in Redditch, among other Wyvern locations, and its investment programme also includes five Tridents — the first new double-deckers since NBC days — for the Matchborough routes. Their arrival was delayed pending tree lopping and shrub clearance by the council, and the buses were diverted temporarily to help out in Leicester and Northampton. Tree lopping is for the usual reason of avoiding roof damage; the shrubs are going because missile-throwing kids

Left: Alexander Dennis Enviro300 67644 (VX54 MSU) on the bus-only Matchborough 'track' in Redditch. LUKE GOTTARD

were hiding behind them to ambush buses on the 'track'. Ian Humphreys hopes to create more civic responsibility by promoting the Tridents as 'your buses'.

Depot arrangements have changed in Redditch. It still uses the NBC-era Plymouth Road depot, in a former railway cutting close to the bus station. Unusually, it has maintenance pits and a wash bay built to accommodate articulated buses, which Midland Red once intended to use on the Matchborough 'track', although there are absolutely no plans today to use artics anywhere in the Midlands fleets. It has closed the separate Church Road maintenance unit and works an inter-cycle maintenance arrangement by which a proportion of Redditch vehicles ends up in Kidderminster each night.

Most garages are over-staffed

Another major change is that thanks largely to the new pay and conditions, four of the five depots (Worcester is the exception) are over-staffed and Wyvern is able to lend drivers to other First companies. It's been doing this on a fairly long-term basis to help out First Essex at Chelmsford and has provided others to places like Norwich, Kings Lynn and Bristol. The deal is that the receiving companies pay to accommodate the drivers in budget hotels of Travelodge standard. 'We used to try flea pits with drivers sleeping three to a room, but that doesn't work,' says Ian Humphreys.

First also is benefiting from some competitors having pulled out of the markets for tendered services and school contracts. In Worcestershire, it reckons the number of independents has fallen from 32 to no more than 14 following a succession of retirements and liquidations as these operators are hit by a combination of insurance, fuel and employment costs.

Ian Humphreys believes this explains why, against its own expectations, it won long-term Warwickshire tenders around Stratford, despite bidding high, whereas it got virtually nothing in the Kidderminster area, where competition is stronger. 'We always put in the equation the "hassle factor". When doing tenders, we look at the implications for the fleet. Does it mean keeping the last of one type of vehicles? Is there a staffing implication?'

And he says it is important not to win the work at any price. 'We have to cap the size of a rural depot. If it's a 24-bus model peak vehicle requirement depot, costs will rise disproportionately by going to 29.' Evesham, which at one point was down to an allocation of eight buses, is up to 23 on a diverse balance of work. Eight Enviro300s operate commercial and contracted routes, five buses run local routes and schools services, four are for school contracts, four are allocated to the Warwickshire contracts and two Worcestershire-owned Flexilink minibuses provide demand responsive services. The increased allocation justified recruitment of a second fitter.

As the new buses arrive, less suitable types are departing. By the spring, the number of Leyland Lynxes in Wyvern had fallen from 50 to just two and the company was looking to offload some of its Plaxton Verde-bodied Dennis Lances to other group fleets prepared to take them. There also has been a massive cull of Mercedes minibuses, with higher capacity mid-life Dennis Darts taking their place.

'My view of minibuses,' says Ian Humphreys, 'is that apart from, for example, Devon and Cornwall where there are physical constraints, it's difficult to make minibuses work.' It's significant that some of the 22-seat Varios transferred from Wyvern to First Devon & Cornwall have been fitted with five extra seats. Their lower seating capacity was because of the old Midland Red West labour agreement, which had separate pay rates for different sizes of bus.

'We know that we're into 5 to 10% inflation of our costs and, with the value of a driver, I don't think 22 seats is the answer. On an urban route, like the Worcester city routes where the Varios were, we still expect to fill more seats than are on a minibus.' While he acknowledges that minibuses did achieve better penetration of housing areas and reintroduced people to bus travel 20 years ago, he remains convinced that frequent direct routes will be more successful.

Twelve-year-old lowheight Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians have been transferred from First Glasgow for some of the schools services. And as the last Leyland Tiger grant coaches are phased out of service, Ian Humphreys has begun to sell local authorities the concept of its yellow schoolbuses with closed circuit television, seatbelts and other built-in safety features.

Right: Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 33405 (VX54 MUB) on demonstration in Redditch in January. BEN MORROLL

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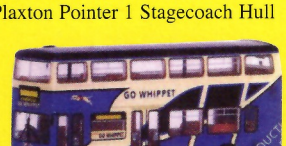
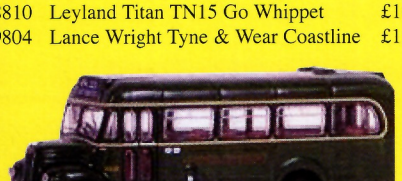
E.F.E. JUNE-JULY RELEASES

E12307	Grenadier North Western	£15.75
E15002	Leyland National Brighton & Hove	£15.75
E20633	Plaxton Pointer 1 Western National	£15.75
E20634	Plaxton Pointer 1 Stagecoach Hull	£15.75



E28810	Leyland Titan TN15 Go Whippet	£16.75
E29804	Lance Wright Tyne & Wear Coastline	£15.75



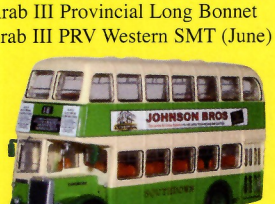
E30503	GUY GS Vixen London Transport GS62	£18.75
E99204	AEC STL London Transport	£18.75
E99205	Guy Arab II Utility Southdown	£18.75
E99206	Daimler Utility Birmingham	£18.75
E99207	Leyland TD1 Plymouth City Transport	£18.75

E.F.E. RECENT RELEASES

E10130	AEC RT London Transport (Green)	£25.75
E12116	Harrington Cavalier Northern	£15.75
E13915	Bristol Lodekka FLF Western SMT	£16.75
E13916	Bristol Lodekka FLF Stagecoach Hull	£15.75
E14404	Leyland National MKI London United	£25.75
E15633	AEC Routemaster Jubilee Arriva	£25.75
E15636	AEC Routemaster RM Stagecoach	£15.75
E16009	Leyland PD2 Ulster Transport	£15.75
E16121	Leyland PD2 Highbridge Bradford	£15.75
E16217	Bristol MW Coach West Yorkshire	£15.75
E16218	Bristol MW Hants & Dorset	£15.75
E16523	Leyland Atlantean Scout Gay Hostess	£30.75
E17702	Leyland National MKII Go Northern	£15.75
E17901	AEC Routemaster RM London Transport	£25.75
E18006	Daimler Fleetline Nottingham City	£15.75
E20130	Bedford OB Western SMT	£15.75
E20131	Bedford OB Coach Wallace Arnold	£16.75
E20432	Bristol VRIII ECW Devon General	£16.75
E20433	Bristol VRIII ECW Alder Valley	£16.75
E20435	Bristol VRIII First Eastern National	£15.75
E20436	Bristol VRIII Yorkshire Rider Bradford	£16.75
E20610	Pointer 1 First Greater Manchester	£19.75
E24322	Leyland Tiger Cub BET Stratford Blue	£15.75
E24604	Beaver 1 South Wales Transport	£15.75
E24810	Mercedes Beaver 1 Devon General	£15.75
E24814	Mercedes Beaver 1 1st Eastern Counties	£18.75
E26314	Guy Arab II Utility Stockport	£16.75
E26315	Guy Arab II Utility Southdown	£18.75
E26603	Paramount 3500 Plymouth Citybus	£12.75
E26604	Paramount 3500 Greenline Invicta	£12.75
E26611	Paramount 3500 Yorkshire Traction	£12.75
E26805	Leyland Tiger Half Cab Duple Ribble	£18.75
E27309	Leyland TDI Closed Samuel Ledgard	£16.75
E27611	Volvo Wright Arriva Merseyside	£16.75
E27901	Daimler DMS O/T Big Bus Co	£18.75
E28809	Leyland Titan Blackburn Transport	£16.75
E29005	Fleetline Swindon Thamesdown	£16.75
E29101	Daimler DMS 2 Door Metrobus	£15.75
E29403	Bristol RELH Coach Badgerline	£16.75
E29404	Bristol RELH Purpose East Midland	£16.75
E29501	Bristol Panorama Type B Greyhound	£15.75
E29502	Bristol Panorama Type B United	£16.75
E29504	Bristol Panorama Type B Royal Blue	£16.75
E29605	Leyland Olympian B Go North East	£15.75
E29606	Leyland Olympian B Maidstone and Dis.	£15.75
E29607	Leyland Olympian B London United	£16.75
E29801	Dennis Wright London & Country	£17.75
E29803	Dennis Wright Pathfinder Badgerline	£15.75
E99201	AEC Regal 10T10 used US Red Cross	£18.75
E99202	Daimler Utility London Transport	£18.75
E99203	Guy Arab II Utility London Transport	£18.75

BRITBUS

AS1-03	AEC Swift Single Door Malta (June)	£27.75
AS2-03	AEC Swift SMS London Transport	£27.75
AS2-04	AEC Swift SM Short London Country (July)	£27.75
GL02	Guy Arab III Grahams of Paisely	£32.75
GL07	Guy Arab III Provincial Long Bonnet	£32.75
GS07	Guy Arab III PRV Western SMT (June)	£32.75



L003	Leyland Titan PD2/12 Beadle Southdown	£32.75
N6106	Scania MCW Metropolitan Trathens	£32.75
N6213	Scania Metropolitan London Transpor	£32.75
N6401	Scania Metropolitan West Yorkshire	£32.75

IRBUS 1/76 SCALE

R702	Olympian Alexander RH Dublin Bus 2 Blue	£32.75
R801	Scania Alexander R London General (July)	£32.75

CORGI O.O.C. JULY-DECEMBER 2005

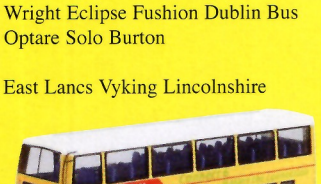
July

OM41209 Wright Gemini Yorkshire Coastliner £18.75

OM41305	Wright Eclipse Fushion Dublin Bus	£24.75
OM44108	Optare Solo Burton	£18.75

August

OM42511	East Lancs Vyking Lincolnshire	£18.75

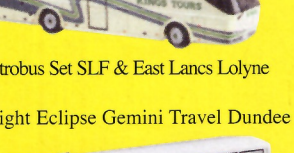


OM45310 Bova Futura Kings of Colchester £18.75

OM99172 Metrobus Set SLF & East Lancs Lolyne £39.75

September

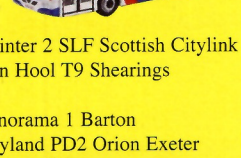
OM41210 Wright Eclipse Gemini Travel Dundee £18.75



OM44705	Pointer 2 SLF Scottish Citylink	£18.75
OM45901	Van Hool T9 Shearings	£18.75

October

OM42411	Panorama 1 Barton	£18.75
OM40904	Leyland PD2 Orion Exeter	£18.75



November

OM42512	East Lancs Vyking Bus Eireann	£18.75
OM45902	Van Hool T9 National Express	£18.75

CORGI JULY-DECEBER 2005 RELEASES

December

OM41211	Wright Eclipse Gemini First London	£18.75
OM44109	Optare Solo Strathtay	£18.75

CORGI O.O.C. Recent Releases

OM40801	Bristol Lodekka FS Southdown	£15.75
OM40805	Bristol Lodekka United Counties	£15.75
OM40811	Bristol Lodekka FS Southern Vectis	£20.75
OM40812	Bristol Lodekka FS Bristol Omnibus	£20.75
OM41101	AEC Regent East Lancs 30ft St. Helens	£15.75
OM41102	Daimler CVG6 E. Lancs Huddersfield	£15.75
OM41103	Leyland PD3A E. Lancs Accrington	£15.75
OM41105	Daimler CVG6 East Lancs Bolton	£15.75
OM41107	Leyland PD3 East Lancs Ramsbottom	£20.75
OM41109	Daimler CVG6 East Lancs Bradford	£18.75
OM41202	Wright Eclipse Gemini Arriva London	£15.75
OM41203	Wright Eclipse Gemini T.W. Midlands	£15.75
OM41207	Wright Eclipse Gemini Yellow Buses	£18.75
OM41301	Wright Fusion Go-Ahead North East	£24.75
OM41302	Wright Solar Fusion Nottingham City	£18.75
OM41303	Wright Eclipse Fusion First Hampshire	£24.75
OM41304	Wright Eclipse Fusion First London	£24.75
OM41908	Leyland PD3 Open Top Provincial	£15.75
OM41909	Leyland PD3 Queen Mary Southdown	£19.75
42402	Plaxton Panorama 1 Southdown	£45.75
OM42409	Plaxton Panorama 1 LUT	£15.75
OM42410	Plaxton Panorama 1 Yelloways	£18.75
OM42504	Lowlander Arriva Fox County	£15.75
OM42510	East Lancs Vyking Delaine of Bourne	£15.75
OM42701	Van Hool Alizee Whippets Coaches	£15.75
OM43311	Plaxton Excalibur (Oxford Express)	£18.75
OM43402	Plaxton Beaver 2 East Yorkshire	£10.75
43405	Plaxton Beaver 2 Travel Merry Hill	£14.75
OM43515	Balloon Tram 721 Michelin Blackpool	£15.75
OM43705	Q1 Trolleybus Rotherham Corporation	£15.75
OM43707	Q1 Trolleybus London Transport	£20.75
OM44106	Optare Solo Ulsterbus (Translink)	£18.75
OM44702	Pointer 2 Metroline	£16.75
OM44703	Pointer 2 Thamesdown	£16.75

CREATIVE MASTER NORTHCORD 1:76 SCALE

UKBUS1006	ALX400 East Yorkshire	£17.75
UKBUS1007	ALX400 Travel West Midlands	£17.75
UKBUS1012	ALX400 Stagecoach Manchester	£17.75
UKBUS1016	ALX400 Stagecoach A1 Service	£17.75
UKBUS2007	President Maynes of Manchester	£17.75
UKBUS2008	President Reading Transport	£17.75
UKBUS2009	President Go-Ahead North East	£17.75
UKBUS2010	President Stagecoach in Manchester	£17.75
UKBUS2011	President Blue Triangle	£17.75
UKBUS3002	Plaxton MPD 8.8m Firstbus	£17.75
UKBUS3007	Plaxton MPD 8.8m Go-North East	£17.75
UKBUS3008	Plaxton MPD 8.8m London United	£17.75

UKBUS3014	Plaxton MPD 8.8m Arriva Pack	£27.75
UKBUS3015	MPD 8.8m Bus Eireann (June)	£17.75
UKBUS3016	MPD 8.8m Metrobus (June)	£17.75
UKBUS3017	MPD 8.8m Brighton & Hove (July)	£17.75
UKBUS4001	Alexander Royale Lothian (May)	£21.75
UKBUS4003	Alexander Royale Metroline (July)	£21.75
UKBUS4004	Royale Travel West Midlands (Aug)	£21.75

We now consider model bus collections for purchase

Pictureview

McAlone at large

Three typically stunning compositions taken in northern England in April by DAVE McALONE, proving that bus pictures need not always be front three-quarter record shots.

1

1 Among the vehicles that Stagecoach North West put back into service in Carlisle following the loss of 84 others in the January floods was 40417 (K117 XHG), an Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D new in 1993.

2 Go North East 8228 (X228 FBB), a Plaxton-bodied Dennis Super Pointer Dart, coming off the Blaydon Bridge.

3 Numerically the second of four Wright Solar Fusion-bodied Scania L94UA articulated buses in the Go North East fleet, 4951 (NK51 OLT) negotiates a flyover at the Gateshead MetroCentre shopping complex. The train below it is a Northern Rail class 156 diesel multiple unit.

pmpvideo.com

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1237. A tribute to Southdown's Queen Mary's. UK. Buses. John Bishop's popular cine of the PD3s plus the 1996 Pool Valley gathering and 21st C Worthing .
1238. Derby / Nottingham. UK. Buses 2004/5. Derby filmed in July 2004 with follow up visit in January 2005, also Nottingham including Bulwell in summer 2004.
1246. Coaching in Comfort. UK. Buses. Rare Southdown promo film, silent b/w features Devon Cornwall by Leopard also BET colour promo film 1950s.
1247. West Yorks. UK. Buses. January 2005. All the latest offerings from Huddersfield, Halifax and Bradford as another new generation of deckers appears.
1248. Harrogate & York. UK. Buses. February 2005. An update on the unique bus scene in sedate Harrogate and a busy winter Saturday morning in York.
1251. Bus Spot Bradford. UK. Buses / Trolleys. Starts with look back at trolleys and buses 1960s/70s then from early nineties video era visits through to 2005.
1252. Retro Compendium. Cairo Trams. Starts with 60s scenes by Jack Price then 1977 followed by 1991 and 1997, City routes, Heliopolis and Helwan lines.
1253. Shropshire. UK. Buses. February 2005. Visits Oswestry, Shrewsbury and finishes at Telford, bright but cold day, busy with lots of new Arriva buses around.
1254. Manchester. UK. Buses. February 2005. An overdue 'bash' at city centre services with hectic weekday scenes near main bus stops in Piccadilly area.
1255. Bus Spot Cheltenham. UK. Buses. A brief look back at former glories then regular visits to the town from the early 90s with 9 visits through to 2005.

1256. Retro Compendium. Tyne & Wear Metro. UK. Light Rail. A look back at the early years with cine from 1981 then video in 1992 with new airport extension.
1257. Ghent. Retro Compendium. Belgium. Trams Trolleybuses. All four of our visits to Ghent from 1990 to 2001 combined in one volume for convenience.
1258. Bus Spot Southampton. UK. Buses. Starts with film of the municipal and NBC fleets in the 1970s with regular coverage right through to the start of 2005.
1259. Hustle 'Bus'tle Hastings. UK. Buses. The Hastings bus scene in an hectic era. Starts old livery 1972 then NBC through privatisation, Topline H&D to 2002.
1260. Belfast. Northern Ireland. UK. Buses. The new 'Metro' branding with pink colour scheme, ll change yet again, lots of deckers few in old red or blue livery.
1261. A Decade in Waterford. Ireland. Buses. A look at buses operating in Waterford city with all visits included between 1994 and 2004 includes independents.
1262. Retro Compendium. Italian Trolleybuses in the early 1990s. Featuring Milan, San Remo, Naples and Parma. A very interesting trolley era re-visited.
1263. Routemaster Invasion. UK. Buses. All previously unshown film dating back to mid 1980s with the spread of sold Routemasters throughout the provinces.
1264. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Ayrshire visiting Kilmarnock, Irvine and Ardrossan all in good spring weather - plenty of activity especially Kilmarnock.
1265. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Motherwell, Hamilton, Airdrie at Easter plus a look back at the GVVT open day and running day the previous autumn.
1266. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Greenock, starts quite sunny much improved bus standards, Paisley late afternoon also Rhu and Garelochhead.
1267. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Glasgow. Easter Saturday morning visit with the First fleet much upgraded although still a great deal of variety.
1268. Cobham. UK. Buses. April 2005. The annual Cobham rally at Wisley airfield in Surrey. The arrivals mostly in glorious sunshine, a memorable day out.
1269. Milton Keynes. UK. Buses. April 2005. A customer suggestion and we are really glad we called by, superb weather, friendly crews, lots of vehicles.
1270. Roll on Spain. Spain. Buses, Tram, Trolleybuses, Steam Rail. A grand tour de force of Spain from 1961 to 1981 with authentic sound, many systems.
1271. Bus Spot Gateshead. UK. Buses. Starts with cine with real sound taken 1983 in NBC era then forward to the Garden Festival and visits up to 2002.
1272. New Spanish Tramways 2005. Spain. Tram/Light Rail. Visits to the new metre gauge line in Bilbao and the four recently opened Barcelona routes.
1273. Spanish Buses 2004 / 2005. Spain. Buses. Barcelona buses in 2004, Bilbao 2005 plus a look at the amazing university services running 1967 artics.

1274. Bus Spot Newcastle. UK. Buses Trolleys. Starts in trolleybus era then through pre PTE era diesel buses, PTE then deregulation right up to 2002.
1275. Chatham. UK. Buses. April 2005. Arriva revamped its Medway services back in 2004 with a big influx of new stock, friendly and busy at bus station.
1276. Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells. UK. Buses. April 2005. Plenty of vehicle variety and Tunbridge Wells provides relief from Arriva on this spring Saturday.
1277. Merseyside. UK. Buses. March/April 2005. Starts in March 2005 at St Helens then a sunny spring week day in Liverpool and similar in Birkenhead in April.
1278. Newcastle and Gateshead. Saturday 30th April 2005. UK. Buses. Newcastle including the bus station and the refurbished Gateshead bus station.
1279. South Shields and Sunderland. Saturday 30th April 2005. UK. Buses. South Shields town centre and then Sunderland bus station area, full of action.
1280. Edinburgh Livingston. May 2005. Scotland / UK. Buses. Both Lothian and First fleets have had an influx of new deliveries, very friendly and sunny.
1281. Lancashire. Burnley, Blackburn, Rawtenstall. UK. Buses. 2005. Mid week visits to all three between February and May, good sunny weather each time.
1282. North Wales. UK. Buses. February – May 2005. Bangor, Caernarfon and Wrexham. Wrexham with it's independents plus sunny Bangor and Caernarfon.
1283. POPS Rally 15th May 2005. UK- Buses. An amazing day out with sunshine from dawn to dusk, a good attendance and plenty of variety, PMP sponsored.

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The Fenton File

MIKE FENTON ventures abroad to describe a most unusual all-British bus

For this month only, my column goes international, but with a vehicle more British than many that have preceded it. It also is of a make — ERF — that I had never photographed before I visited Malta in October 2003.

Edwin R. Foden and his son Dennis founded ERF — E. R. Foden & Son — in 1933 following a policy dispute with other family members in the much older Fodens company, which at the time still specialised in steam-powered vehicles. Both companies were based in Sandbach, Cheshire and primarily were lorry manufacturers. From the early 1980s, however, ERF's South African subsidiary built over 1,600 Trailblazer single-deck bus and coach chassis with a choice of front, underfloor and rear engines. Stagecoach bought several of them for its African fleets.

Malta provides the best opportunity to sample ERF buses away from Africa. Five coaches, of which four have Spanish-built Unicar bodies, the fifth a Camo body from Portugal. The sixth has a vertical underfloor Cummins engine and a 45-seat high-floor Marshall bus body.

It was built in 1995 as a demonstrator when the Maltese authorities were considering what might replace the Mediterranean island's aged route buses. As the picture shows, this was before low-floor buses were on the agenda. It subsequently found regular employment when purchased in June 1997 by Philip Bonnici of Sannat, on the neighbouring island of Gozo and was given the registration FBY 006.

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REMEMBERING BUSES THE WAY THEY USED TO BE

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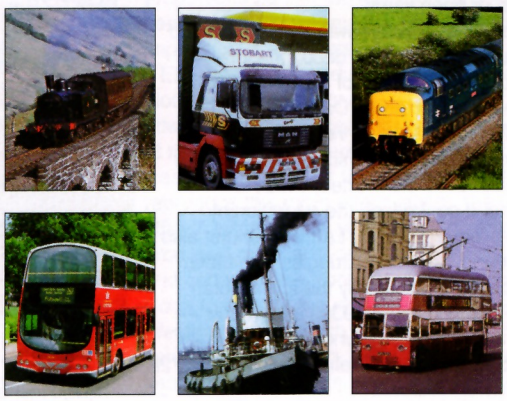

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BOOKS

GREEN LINE

LAURIE AKEHURST, CAPITAL TRANSPORT PUBLISHING, ISBN 185414 290 9, 280MM x 217MM, 144pp, HARDBACK, £22

To mark this year's 75th anniversary of the start of Green Line commuter coach services in London, Capital Transport has once again excelled itself with an elegantly designed, thoroughly researched and well-written history.

Laurie Akehurst spent his entire working life at London Transport and his father was a Green Line conductor. He takes the story from the introduction of other operators' out-of-town services before 1930 up to the last day of 1969, when LT handed over its country bus and coach operations to London Country Bus Services.

While this is primarily about Green Line, its coaches and its services, it also is a history of Greater London over the past 75 and more years. Details of route and fare changes are interwoven with social trends and land use planning. Of the five-and-a-half-day week with an extra rush hour on Saturday lunchtimes. And of a network that grew as hospitals were centralised and many Londoners were relocated to the peripheral new towns and overspill communities.

Among many revelations is one that Green Line was set up on a shoestring. While the Underground combine equipped it with 251 brand new AEC Regal coaches, the first crews were kitted out only with caps and white tunics. Many ticket punches were pistol punches used immediately post-World War 1 on emergency lorry buses, and many garages were little more than sheds or open yards.

Its one big early mistake was to make Poland Street coach station, an art deco structure in the heart of Soho, the hub of the operation. That opened on Christmas Day 1930, but closed in February 1934, a victim of the traffic congestion it caused in the surrounding streets and of the Amulree Committee, which recommended controls on the operation of coaches in central London. Laurie Akehurst also relates Green Line's long struggles with traffic commissioners — especially the formidable Gleeson Robinson in the 1930s and 1940s — and even as late as 1967 when the commissioners of the day refused plans for a 728 route to Stansted Airport.

While most Green Line coaches were single-deck, the book reminds us not only that there also were significant numbers of Routemasters and RTs on the network, but that LT had plans to run others, to reduce peak period duplication and even some headways on more frequent services. In 1936, someone floated the idea of putting 50 forward-entrance STLs on the Romford corridor. That didn't happen and six-wheel double-deck Q188, although painted in Green Line livery, was blacked by crews and had to be used elsewhere.

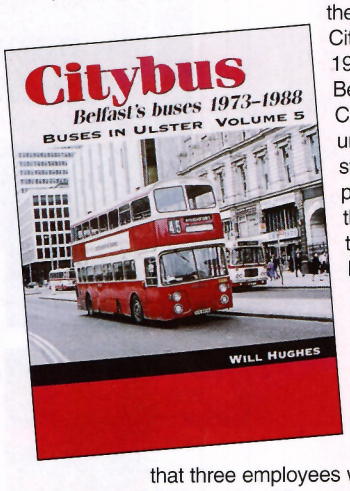
As it planned to restore services post World War 2, the idea was to run the entire network with 386 RT-based double-deck coaches. The routes would all avoid low bridges and it would have involved eight fewer coaches an hour crossing central London than prewar. While there was some postwar double-deck operation, RF-class AEC Regal IVs provided the backbone of services over the last 20 years of this history.

From the late-1950s, the story is one of decline and fighting a losing battle against congestion and staff shortages. Records from one day in 1938 showed fewer than 1% of coaches were more than 10min late reaching central London. Thirty years later, Green Line compounded external problems by introducing one-man operation and making punctuality much harder and less predictable as drivers struggled to maintain schedules and answer the myriad queries conductors had dealt with before. Two statistics tell this sad story over the 1968/69 conversion period: year-on-year loadings down 16%, with route 710 down 60%; and weekly tickets (no longer available on the coach) down from 2,346 to 468. Another self-inflicted wound was to allow severe staff shortages at Windsor to dictate cuts in route 704, the most profitable Green Line of its day.

CITYBUS - BELFAST'S BUSES 1973-1988

WILL HUGHES, COLOURPOINT BOOKS, ISBN 1 898392 99 4, 230MM x 180MM, 176pp, SOFTBACK, £18

For the fifth in the publisher's *Buses in Ulster* volumes, Will Hughes looks at the bus operation that functioned against more adversity than probably any other in the 1970s and 1980s. For the story of Citybus, created in 1973 to take the Belfast Corporation undertaking into state ownership, parallels some of the worst years of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'.



As with the Green Line book, it's a story summed up by telling statistics. Worst of all is that three employees were killed over the years of this book, while a combination of hijackings, bombings and fire-bombings exacted a huge toll on the fleet. Just as an example, Belfast Corporation bought 151 Daimler Fleetlines with MH Coachworks bodies between 1962 and 1964 (with rear emergency windows, incidentally, that looked straight off a prewar Leyland). Twenty-seven were destroyed before Citybus took over and a further 102 were lost between 1973 and 1980. Alexander rebodied eight of them to a similar design to the original, but all were subsequently destroyed. An unfortunate newer Fleetline had the distinction of being rebodied twice and destroyed three times.

Some damage was caused only indirectly by terrorism. Out of 40 Atlanteans delivered in 1975/76 — the last all-new double-deckers for 25 years — 24 were destroyed by direct action, but poor road surfaces and speed ramps on the approaches to police stations and other security installations wrecked the chassis outriggers on most of the others.

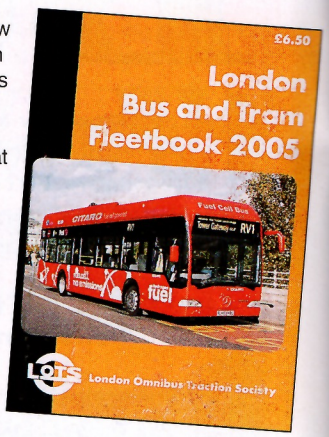
The Citybus solution was to specify standee single-deckers with spartan seating, non-opening windows and, ultimately, with flat, toughened glass windscreens. To maintain some sort of additional fleet replacement policy, it bought secondhand rear-engined single-deckers from England and Wales. The bus of choice for new purchases over much of this time was the Bristol RELL and eventually Citybus and Ulsterbus were able to buy surplus ECW-bodied examples from National Bus Company fleets. Before then, having inherited AEC Swifts and single-deck Daimler Fleetlines from Belfast Corporation, it bought Merlins and Swifts from London Transport, single-deck Fleetlines from PMT and Northern General. Many were pressed into service as soon as they rolled off the next ferry.

Yet these weren't entirely troubled times, for the book's many illustrations and informative words tell us of inter-station services and the transition from a two-zone fare collection system with tokens to a flat fare with paper tickets, some of which were designed personally by the redoubtable Werner Heubeck, managing director at Ulsterbus and Citybus.

LONDON BUS AND TRAM FLEETBOOK 2005

LONDON OMNIBUS TRACTION SOCIETY, ISBN 1 897983 80 8, 117MM x 102MM, 128pp, SOFTBACK, £6.50

The spirit of the old Ian Allan *abc* is alive and well once again in LOTS's annual Fleetbook of London buses and Croydon trams. It is pocket-sized with six colour and 32 black-and-white pictures, but if you want to know by how much the population of Routemasters has shrunk, how many articulated Citaros are around and what makes up the Redroute Buses fleet, it's all in here. Besides the basic details of who runs what, LOTS provides useful pocket portraits of each operator. What it doesn't provide — and it would be nice if it did — are details of immediate past owners and dates of acquisition of secondhand buses. But that might require more pages and a higher cover price. What you do get



is accurate, as affordable as a couple of pints of beer and, for many, information that is just as intoxicating and much longer lasting.

CROWE BROTHERS OF OSMOTHERLEY

Written and published by PETER J. CARDNO & FRANK C. REEVE (P. J. Cardno, 22 Welldale Crescent, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 7HU), No ISBN number, 210MM x 147MM, 64pp, SOFTBACK, £8

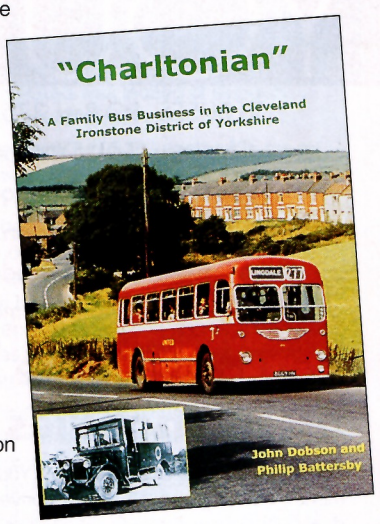
This is the story of a typical rural bus operator, which in this case served many of the villages between Stockton and Northallerton from the 1920s until its founders retired in 1964. One of the two Crowes learned about motor vehicles while serving in the army in World War 1 and they managed to mix their running of bus services with bits of farming.

The buses were part of village life, carrying not just passengers but delivering farm machinery, fish, wedding bouquets — and the odd errant ferret — along their routes. Besides details of a fleet that once included a rare — for Britain — German-built Opel Blitz, the authors have unearthed tales of people who worked on these buses. Few seem larger than life than conductor Athelstan Pollitt Bennison, a failed scientist who smoked strange herbal tobacco and had a wrist movement that seemed almost to juggle the coins from his change bag.

CHARLTONIAN

JOHN DOBSON & PHILIP BATTERSBY, VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, ISBN 1 898432 59 7, 210MM x 145MM, 32pp, SOFTBACK, £4.75

At first glance, the cover of this little book would have you believe it's about United Auto, one of whose Bristol MWs provides the main illustration. Closer examination reveals it's about the operator of the little bus in the bottom left-hand corner, a 1920s Teesside business that sold out on the eve of the introduction of road service licensing. John Dobson is that operator's grandson, while Philip Battersby provides the technical information from the perspective of an enthusiast and bus historian.



Books reviewed by ALAN MILLAR

1/76th SCALE DIECAST MODELS

CORGI ORIGINAL OMNIBUS COMPANY BRADFORD DAIMLER CVG6LX/30/EAST LANCS

Guide price £18.75

I'm not absolutely wild about OOC's East Lancs halfcab casting, for although many chassis types can carry it in many liveries, it has overly heavy window pillars, especially on the upper deck corners, and the cab is too narrow. However, in its guise as Bradford Daimler 226 (EAK 226D), this is a better variant of an imperfect casting.

There are two versions, with different destinations on the same route. Bradford Moor is the super-limited edition one, illustrated here. The all-important Manchester-style front end is well shaped, helped by headlamps and sidelights with lenses and neatly fashioned mudguards. Rearview mirrors are well detailed, but out of scale (presumably to make them robust). Livery detail is good. But some of the glazing — and especially the too shallow front window ventilators — isn't quite right.

SOLENT BLUE LINE EAST LANCS SET

Guide price £43

With the impending sale of Southern Vectis, there may be added interest in this attractively-boxed twin set, which features two East Lancs-bodied Blue Line double-deckers — 1999 Dennis Trident/Lolyne 743 (T743 JPO) and 2001 Volvo B7TL/Myllennium Vyking 752 (HX51 ZRD).

The Dennis is in the earlier two-tone blue/yellow livery, the Volvo in allover blue with tiny vinyl orange trim lines. Both vehicles are well captured by the castings, the Lolyne suffering from two sets of visible joins around the upper deck front, the Myllennium having a severe join line below the destination displays and particularly chunky rearview mirrors. The front windscreens and dash of the Myllennium are particularly well captured.

The models neatly show how the front and rear ends appear grafted on to the similar body sides, just like the real thing. Both have side window bars printed on glazing, the Trident with colours not quite matching the metal of the body.

OOC models reviewed by JOHN G. LIDSTONE

EXCLUSIVE FIRST EDITIONS WESTERN SMT BRISTOL LODEKKA FLF

Guide prices £17 to £22

EFE has produced two versions of the FLF in Western SMT livery, one for sale through the usual retail outlets, the other exclusively through *Classic Bus* magazine for £22. The regular model represents 1963-delivered JB1822 (VCS 376) as delivered for Paisley locals, while the *Classic Bus* special, of which 600 have been produced, shows Western's first FLF of all, DB1711 (TCS 159), one of a pair operated on Dumfries town services.

On JB1822, the blank cream advertisement panels with scalloped edges between decks are reproduced well and the rear aspect looks particularly effective with the addition of a fine 'Travel by bus and avoid parking worries' advert, as carried below the lower deck emergency exit on many of these buses, together with seating capacities carried on the lower deck cream band.

The front end grille, headlamps and offset registration also look the part, together with the Cotton Street destination and P8A route number for the service from Foxbar even if, in real life, Paisley drivers were not normally as careful about showing the correct route number. The side profile carries the legal lettering in correct proportions behind the forward entrance, and the vehicle has red wheels rather than the later impractical cream version.

EFE has not reproduced the attractive Western block fleetname before. It's a pretty good attempt, although it lacks the intricate subtleties of the real thing, where a lighter shade of red was used to pick out the gold. Corgi managed to reproduce this more effectively on the Guy Arab utility it issued a few years ago and also produced more accurate thinner fleetnumbers and codes on the front and rear. This allowed Corgi to encase the rear fleetnumber within the Western garter, which was carried on these vehicles until the mid-1960s move to carrying year codes made this impractical on double-deckers. These, however, are minor issues.

DB1711 is shown operating on route D5 to Queensberry Square. Other enhancements are excellent period advertisements for Western's 'Parcels by Bus' service on the nearside and Haig Scotch Whisky on the offside. EFE has taken the opportunity to give this model thinner fleetnumbers.

EFE reviewed by GARRY WARD

YOU WRITE

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You can blame it on the hoodies

Further to Neil MacDonald's letter (You Write last month) querying Lothian Buses' conversion of dual-door double-decks to single-door, I would confirm that he is quite correct that we believe dual-door buses give significantly lower loading times by allowing simultaneous boarding and alighting.

That was and still is our belief. However, in recent years two external factors have changed, which mean that, even though we believe dual-door is the best option, we are no longer able to pursue that policy and are having to convert to single-door.

One of these factors is the substantially increasing claims culture, whereby large numbers of fraudulent claims are made, alleging 'the driver shut the centre door on me before I got off and bruised my arm, and I want £500 compensation' or similar, which are submitted by lawyers working on a no win/no fee basis.

We investigate all claims thoroughly and rebut all we find to be unproven. Unfortunately, in many cases we are unable to provide hard evidence to prove that the incident did not take place, as the centre doors are beyond the driver's line of vision, and even closed circuit television cameras do not always give a perfect view, particularly on buses with standing passengers.

The second factor is the increasing tendency, particularly of that sector of society so beloved of the Bluewater shopping centre management — the hooded top or Burberry baseball cap wearer — to board by the exit door in order to avoid paying the fare.

In short, nothing has changed from the transport perspective. Dual-door still offers the fastest loading and quickest journeys, but changes in society's attitudes have forced us to follow a course of action that we believe is fundamentally wrong, but we have no other option. Sad but true.

Neil Renilson
Chief Executive, Lothian Buses, Edinburgh

Managers and drivers need to see it as passengers

Dominic Eaton (You Write last month) writes an interesting letter. However, I must take issue on a couple of points.

First, while it may be true to say that some complainants are what the railway industry terms 'vexatious' (my dictionary defines this as 'difficult to deal with and causing a lot of annoyance, worry or argument') that is not the same thing as saying that 'some complainants are time wasters and liars'.

In the course of the four years I have spent doing this job, I have seen some excellent bus company responses to legitimate complaints and I have also seen too many abysmal ones. I have come across few passenger letters of complaint that do not have some substance to them. While it may be true that 'to be writing letters of complaint on both 30 November and 1 December indicates a tendency to be a bit of a recurrent complainant', it may, on the other hand, indicate that the bus company in question is running a hopelessly inadequate quality of service.

I can think of an example of a passenger who contacted us to complain when her local operator failed to operate the same early morning journey on three successive days that she needed to catch to get to work. She wrote a brief letter to the operator to complain on each occasion and got an identical standard reply by return of post each time, to say how sorry the company was and that it would try harder. It is not surprising that the passenger thought these words rang a little hollow after she was left standing at her stop on the third consecutive day.

Mr Eaton may choose to label her a 'recurrent complainant'. I would say that she was severely let down by an operator who despatched quick replies, ticking the customer response box, but who seemed incapable of ticking the reliable bus service box (this example had nothing to do with traffic congestion).

Mr Eaton then goes on to berate your Service Extra columnist Julian Osborne, saying that he 'demonstrates ignorance of the situation drivers find themselves in when taking over a bus'. On the contrary, I think he fully understands. Julian highlights a situation that any regular bus user will recognise as a not uncommon occurrence. It is also one that is often raised at bus users' surgeries that we organise.

Many passengers do understand and do sympathise with bus drivers for the pressures they routinely face. Some of us even have first hand experience of this, having earned our living by driving buses at one time or another. Where the problem lies, I think, is that not enough bus drivers (or managers) have experience of being bus passengers and many are unable to empathise with the passenger experience.

Only recently, when travelling on a bus that had some recovery time, the driver of the bus in front got on this bus (with his lit cigarette) and started talking to 'my' driver, within the hearing of other bus users, about some alleged misdemeanour of a 'bloody passenger'. While he was doing this, I could see that other prospective passengers were unable to board the bus in front. It would be interesting to know what they thought of their driver.

On another recent occasion, I was travelling on a bus that arrived a couple of minutes early at a crew changeover point mid-route. The driver prevented anyone from boarding, but waited for the relief driver, who was a couple of minutes late. When he arrived, this driver then proceeded to sign on, check his cash and after all this he let his waiting passengers on, who included a heavily pregnant woman. Why did the early running driver not engage with these passengers by checking and/or issuing tickets and letting them sit down?

As Mr Eaton notes at the end of his letter, keeping passengers informed can have 'amazing results'.

I should conclude by saying that these form a small number of incidents and that there are many excellent bus drivers around. Bus Users UK has previously recognised some of these through the Welcome Aboard Award. Regrettably, there is still a small minority of bus drivers who see the situation as one of 'them and us' and who do their colleagues no favours. These drivers take a perverse pleasure in situations such as making passengers wait at changeovers and may help foster the views of passengers who, as Mr Eaton says, 'demonstrate extreme impatience'.

Joe Lynch - Areas Officer, Bus Users UK
Liskeard, Cornwall

First Contravision 'hurts the eyes'

How often, I wonder, does the senior management of FirstGroup actually travel on its buses? Does it not realise how unpleasant it is to have to travel on vehicles whose windows are

covered in Contravision route branding? I have the misfortune to travel on First Halifax's new Wright Eclipse Gemini buses branded for routes 503 and 576. On numerous occasions, I have watched passengers trying to find a window seat that is not obscured by this material, which I find hurts the eyes.

Regular users of the routes concerned know where they are going, but pity the poor passengers who are looking for a particular stop or landmark on their journey. There are also people who still enjoy having a bus ride and like to look out of the windows.

To my way of thinking, First has nothing to boast about in advertising these so-called improved services. It ought first to address the issues of poor timekeeping and litter-strewn buses driven badly by belligerent drivers. When it has achieved that, then is the time to publicise the service, but please not with Contravision.

How long will it be before First does away with windows altogether? Just think of the money that it could save replacing etched windows.

David J. Croft
Bradford

The customer is surely king

Over the past few months, I have read both of the comments by Bernie Waters of Town & Country Travel (You Write, March and June). I thought to myself on both occasions how wonderful it must be to sit right at the very heart of the bus industry, blessed with the thick skin that only 39 years of service can bring, to casually dismiss the slightest hint of criticism as the sarcastic bleating of somebody else less qualified than oneself.

Certainly, if in my job I ever replied to a customer concern to say the complainant didn't know a thing about the business I was in and should therefore lighten up, I would find myself next door in the Job Centre seeking alternative employment.

Face facts, Bernie: the customer is king. It makes not one scrap of difference whether he is involved in the bus industry or not. If this had been the opinion of one of your own passengers writing in to, say, the local press, would you have been so dismissive? Heavens, I hope not.

John Lidstone did not need to make any justification of his credentials. His status in this matter is totally irrelevant. You have a member of the public, a customer perhaps, saying that two of your buses do not come up to scratch. Do something about it, instead of hurling barbed missiles at the messenger.

Howard Wilde
Hyde, Cheshire

Picture left: One of the Contravision-covered buses David Croft complains about is First West Yorkshire 32529 (YJ54 XVW). This was one of a handful of Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs supplied without frames for commercial advertising, hence the company's decision to apply overall route branding in the group's latest style with smiling faces. ANDREW JAROSZ

The EU and cab doors

I would like to respond to the article 'EU shuts door on Berlin halfcabs' (Global News, June).

EU Directive 2001/85 — the so-called 'bus construction directive' — requires that a driver's compartment shall either be accessible via the passenger compartment or be fitted with an external cab door *and* have a second means of emergency exit (e.g. window). If access is via the passenger compartment, then it shall permit a test piece 45cm wide and 190cm high to pass.

Thus, for the Berlin design of halfcab not to qualify, then it must have an unfeasibly narrow exit into the gangway.

Furthermore, the EU legislation is only mandatory for new vehicles. Retrofits, as referred to in the article, are exempt under EU law, but may be banned under German law. It would, therefore, seem that this is once again a case of Brussels being blamed wrongly for banning something.

There would, however, be a rich irony in Directive 2001/85 having a negative impact on German bus design, since it was the German bus manufacturing industry that had a major influence on the drafting of the directive.

Incidentally, I always thought that the term halfcab implied a driver compartment with exterior cab door.

Robert Missen
Kraainem, Belgium

The best engines . . . the worst bus?

It wasn't until after I'd written my piece for March *Buses* that the idea of heading it 'The O.600: Leyland's best engine?' came to mind, the question mark deliberately included. David Wayman's letter (You Write, April) addresses the quite different question of which was the best bus engine, regardless of make.

His letter also brings in the long-debated pros and cons of small engines versus big ones. I, too, am an admirer of Gardner engines and even wonder, had I been required to select buses for whose overall behaviour and costs I would be held responsible, whether I might have chosen this engine make, although I'm pretty sure with six cylinders, at any rate in double-deckers.

Vehicle performance is a matter of arithmetic, with the weight of the vehicle and occupants as influential as engine torque and power. I was intrigued by John Lidstone's evident surprise at the lively performance of the Cobham Bus Museum's beautifully restored 1937 AEC Regent, STL 2377. I haven't had an opportunity to ride in it, but well remember the nimble behaviour of such buses in London traffic right up to withdrawal, the secret being that the typical unladen weight was a mere 6ton 12cwt, fairly typical of double-deckers of the later 1930s. Hence 98hp or so from the 7.7litre direct-injection engine was well able to cope with this plus 56 seated passengers, aided by the preselector gearbox.

Even so, it is worth remembering that, when new, its engine would have been in Ricardo Comet-head form, with up to 115hp or so available and power-to-weight ratio then even better than the typical RT or RM of later years.

Might I also beg to differ with the editor's description of Cobham's newly restored Guy Arab, G351, as 'slow and ponderous'. The unladen weight in this case is quoted as 7ton 10cwt and with the original Gardner 5LW's rating of 85hp and a slow gearchange, my memory of most wartime Guys was indeed of sluggish acceleration and hill-climbing.

On the inaugural run G351 seemed to me to be coping with various gradients noticeably better than I expected. I gather the engine restoration had been done under the personal supervision of Paul Gardner, and I wonder if it might have been upgraded at least to the 94hp given by the K-type modifications of 1950. The bus had been among the first with Guy's postwar constant mesh gearbox and the gearchanges were quicker than with the older type.

All the foregoing can be dismissed as history, yet I wonder how many readers might echo Tim Hall's reaction to the Wright StreetCar as 'ridiculous', as indeed I do. Seats for only 42 passengers in a length of 18.75m and a cost of £300,000. Has the bus industry gone mad? I notice that we are not told the answers to the first questions that always come to my mind in considering a new bus design — the vehicle weight and engine output. What about fuel consumption, with its implications for global warming?

I recognise that it is pretending to be a modern-style tram, nowadays seen as 'trendy', yet even in that it seems more based on fantasy than reality. If attracting car users is the objective, surely providing a comfortable seat for any passenger aboard for more than say 10min is essential. Putting fleets of such vehicles, each longer than two RMLs, on the congested streets of British cities seems a good recipe for monumental traffic jams.

Alan Townsin
Steventon, Hants

STL *v* SRT

I refer to the quote from John Lidstone on p12 of May *Buses* about his ride on STL2377. My first reaction is to wonder how many subscribers to this magazine remember the morphing of STL to SRT, but addressing John's observation 'Tales of underpowered and poorly-braked SRTs led me to expect . . .'

The STL was a Chiswick-designed and Chiswick-built body; there were exceptions, but the Chiswick-built product was stylish, comfortable but built to a deliberately spartan finish. This AEC 7.7litre-powered bus tipped the scales at 6ton 12cwt.

When a Park Royal-built RT-family body was mounted on the suitably modified chassis (SRT), the overall weight went up to 7ton 5cwt, over half a ton more, without any modification to either engine or brake performance. Hence the SRT was doomed to fail . . . such failures seeing the temporary replacement of the SRT by 1929 AEC Regent ST1 and the oddly bodied STL1250.

But I did enjoy seeing and hearing an RT with the aural delights of an engine note and gearbox gurgle of an STL.

And what was the cost, in pounds, shillings and pence, of the SRT scheme? One feels the programme could never have been amortised. Rather like Croydon Tramlink? Will the respective truths ever be known?

Michael Dryhurst
Shingle Springs, California

Tour companies undersell local bus travel

I see that the tourist bus service in Malta has been seen as a failure (Global News last month). While this is a shame, it is not really surprising given the general attitude of package tour operators to public transport. When I visited the island in 2003 there was no publicity for the local buses in the hotel, but car hire and coach tours were displayed prominently even though there were buses to most of the tourist areas and tourist tickets available, but again no mention at the hotel.

Tour operators often offer free parking at airports (despite BAA stating that it encourages public transport use).

Ask the average tour rep about local buses and you are likely to get a blank look and a suggestion that you hire a car. This applies in many places, not just Malta. It is almost as if public transport is for the local peasants only. No doubt the same tour operators then get complaints about traffic congestion spoiling people's holidays.

Colin Brazier
Southsea

Duplicated registrations

I was amused to read in April Fleet News Ireland about the many registration number changes of the 2966-75 batch of Volvo B7TL double-deckers for Metro in Belfast.

This certainly looked like the sort of material one might expect in an April issue, but the story is undoubtedly true. Any truth in the rumour that these vehicles are to be fitted with dot matrix registration displays to cope with the frequent changes?

As your correspondent says, this is probably the first double issuing error on Ulsterbus/Citybus vehicles since 1971. I remember the 1971 incident very well. So does G. Irvine Millar, who was then head of the Ulsterbus department that included fleet control. Then new Leyland Leopards 1451-500 were to have registrations COI 1451-500 and indeed the batch started off with the booked registrations.

Bus enthusiast G. F. Miller (no relation to G. I. Millar) then saw a car with the same registration as a new Ulsterbus Leopard and, to cut a long story short, the 1451-500 batch was re-registered DOI 3451-500.

R. A. Hunter
Carrickfergus

Wallasey Atlantean remembered again

Your picture of the Wallasey Corporation Leyland Atlantean in the April Rally Calendar supplement took me back a long way.

I was, at that time, a young traffic clerk at Ribble's Preston headquarters and dearly wanted to travel on this vehicle. Holidays not being very plentiful in those days, I had to wait until Good Friday 1959. Having ascertained from Wallasey Corporation that the vehicle would be operating on the New Brighton to Moreton service on that day, I took myself off to New Brighton, sandwich in pocket.

The Atlantean duly arrived and I managed to secure a front upstairs seat. All went well until we entered the Moreton estate, where the driver later told me that he had been instructed to take care not to hit the estate's high kerbs with the front end. This he did, but unfortunately he hit a parked car with the rear end, forgetting his extra length.

I offered to stand as a witness as to how badly the car was parked, which was gratefully accepted, and hoped that, as a result, not too much would be made of the incident.

Richard W. Mitchell
Liversedge, W. Yorks

Why North Weald Rally has really been cancelled

As you reported in last month's *Buses*, we have had to cancel this year's North Weald Rally, which was scheduled for 26 June.

The reason we have had to do this is owing to an impossible set of health and safety regulations imposed by Epping Forest District Council, the owner of North Weald Airfield, as well as being messed around by the council. In the past three or four years, the management there has changed four times. It was a result of this that it messed up our date in 2002, when we had to put the event back by three weeks.

This year, despite our stressing to the new manager back in July 2004 that it was essential to have the date fixed well before Christmas (as we always had done until 2001) in order to allow adequate time for advance publicity, it has dragged its heels — almost to the point that I wonder whether this has been deliberate.

In February we were presented with a huge screed of dos and don'ts, one of which was an insistence that all stallholders have their own insurance. In previous years, our own insurance covered everything. This lost us several stalls (and therefore income to fund the event) who were unable to meet the EFDC's stringent requirements.

We almost cancelled the event back in February. If it had been my decision alone, we would have, but our committee over-ruled me. Nevertheless, we sent the EFDC our method statement and risk assessment on 24 February and as far as we were concerned — especially bearing in mind we had staged the event at the airfield for 20 years without a serious accident happening or insurance claim being made — were able to give adequate answers to the various and often very pernickety points its Events Scrutiny Group raised.

Despite our rally officer, Roy Johnson, chasing it for a reply, we heard nothing until 3 May, and this was merely a nitpicking letter querying such issues as 'stall anchorage'. Since one of the regulation 'anoraks' managed to tip over one of our own tables last year when one of the EFDC's officials happened to be passing, this was one we could not get out of.

In any case, the fact that the EFDC had again double booked us with another event (Wings & Wheels) on the other side of the airfield and was also bleating about 'conflicts of traffic between the two events' (again despite there being little problem with this in 2003 and 2004), we decided enough was enough and had to cancel the event while there was still a reasonable amount of time to advertise its cancellation.

An additional concern that has been brought to my attention is that, apparently, a rumour has been circulating at various bus rallies in recent weeks that the cancellation is a wind-up and that the event really is going ahead after all. Please can you emphasise that there will not be a North Weald Rally this year or, probably, ever again. Our event has long been plagued by such malicious tales by those who, for whatever reason, wanted to sabotage it. I know definitely that rumours that it was cancelled last year contributed to a lower attendance.

Jim Blake
Chairman
North London Transport Society

Metroline also advises us that it has cancelled its open day at Holloway on 25 June — Ed.

Poor standards of English

I agree entirely with David Wayman (You Write last month) on the subject of poor standards of English in modern fleetnames. However, an arguably even worse example can be found on p60 of the same issue. The otherwise very smart Scania/East Lancs OmniDekka of Thames Travel, on which no less than an educational establishment allows the three words of its name to begin with lower case letters. Educational standards must be failing somewhere, if only in the Oxford area of all places.

Nevertheless, perhaps the worst example nationwide is set by First, which doesn't even dot the 'i' in its own name. Am I really the only person to have noticed this?

Tim Hall
London, SW15

Dawn of a pink movement?

There seems to be a sudden vogue for pink buses. In last month's *Buses* there was a picture of Thames Travel's pink OmniDekka. In the previous issue was a pink Vario for First's Tamar Link in Plymouth. In the previous issue to that were the pink Lolynes for the same service. And no doubt we can soon look forward to a picture of one of Konectbus's pink Pulsar Geminis for Norwich park-&-ride.

Now correct me if I'm wrong, but do I not remember Southern Vectis painting a bus overall pink as a threat to schoolkids that if they misbehaved they would have to suffer the indignity of being transported to school in the pink bus?

Stephen Morris
Shepperton, Middlesex

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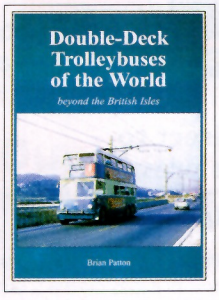

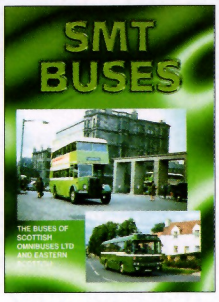

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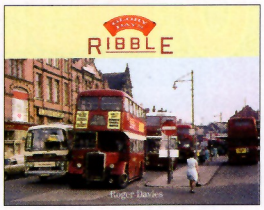

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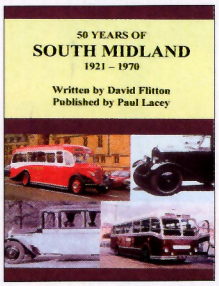

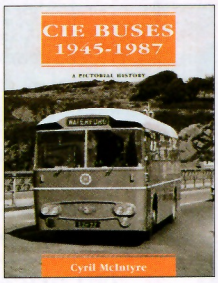

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Invaluable guide to restored buses and bus museums throughout the British Isles. The 2005 edition has a more comprehensive list of privately preserved vehicles and now has colour photos throughout. 128 pages.
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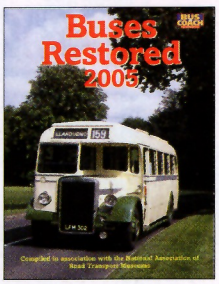

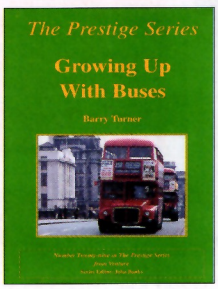

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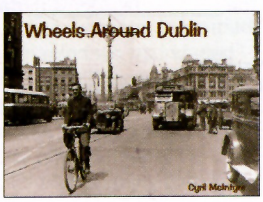

This advertisement contains a tiny proportion of our stock of bus and tram items.

All of those above plus around 15,000 transport books and DVDs are featured on our easy to search, secure web site at

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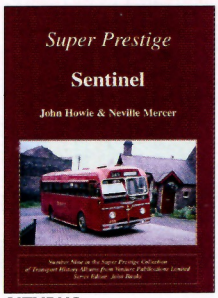

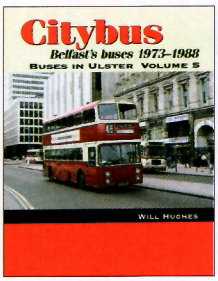

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by David W Allen
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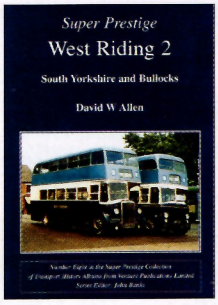
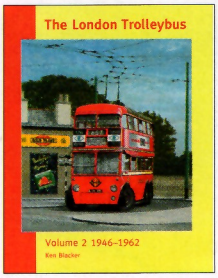
96 pages. Softback £16.95





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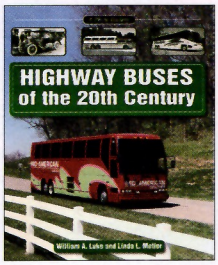
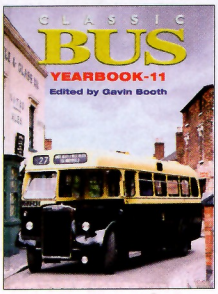
Detailed history from the end of WWII to May 1962 packed with information, includes route map. 4 colour, 344 b/w photos. 216 pages. Hbk. £25.00

HIGHWAY BUSES of the 20th CENTURY
by W A Luke & L Metler
New 'Iconografix' photo Gallery with 300 b/w images with insightful captions, of America's intercity, charter, tour and sightseeing bus industry. 160pp. Sbk. £19.95





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BUJul-b

Our latest **Rail and Road Transport catalogue (32)** *is now available: call 01455 254 470 for your free copy.*

Publicity Matters

Nice publicity, shame about the service. That's STEPHEN MORRIS's verdict on publicity for the services to his local hospital.

The leaflet under scrutiny this month isn't by an operator or a local authority but by the Ashford & St Peter's National Health Service Trust in Surrey. Ashford is the second urban centre in Spelthorne Borough, which, as it is on the edge of Transport for London's area, isn't too badly off for public transport.

St Peter's Hospital, on the other hand, is on a bit of rural land some distance out of Chertsey and many health services are being centred there, despite the fact that it is quite inaccessible for most people. That includes car users because — like most hospitals these days — it has inadequate parking for its size. And as it's in the middle of nowhere, bounded by trunk roads and little lanes, there's nowhere else to park either.

The trust has encouraged people to try and use what bus services there are by producing a nice little all-colour leaflet. It's nearly a trendy 'journey planner'. It's not called a 'journey planner' but it tells you that 'this guide shows you how to plan your travel by public transport to St Peter's Hospital'. It has very good information in it about car parking and a nice map showing the main roads to the site, which suggests it probably expects you to conclude that getting there by public transport is a non-starter in many cases.

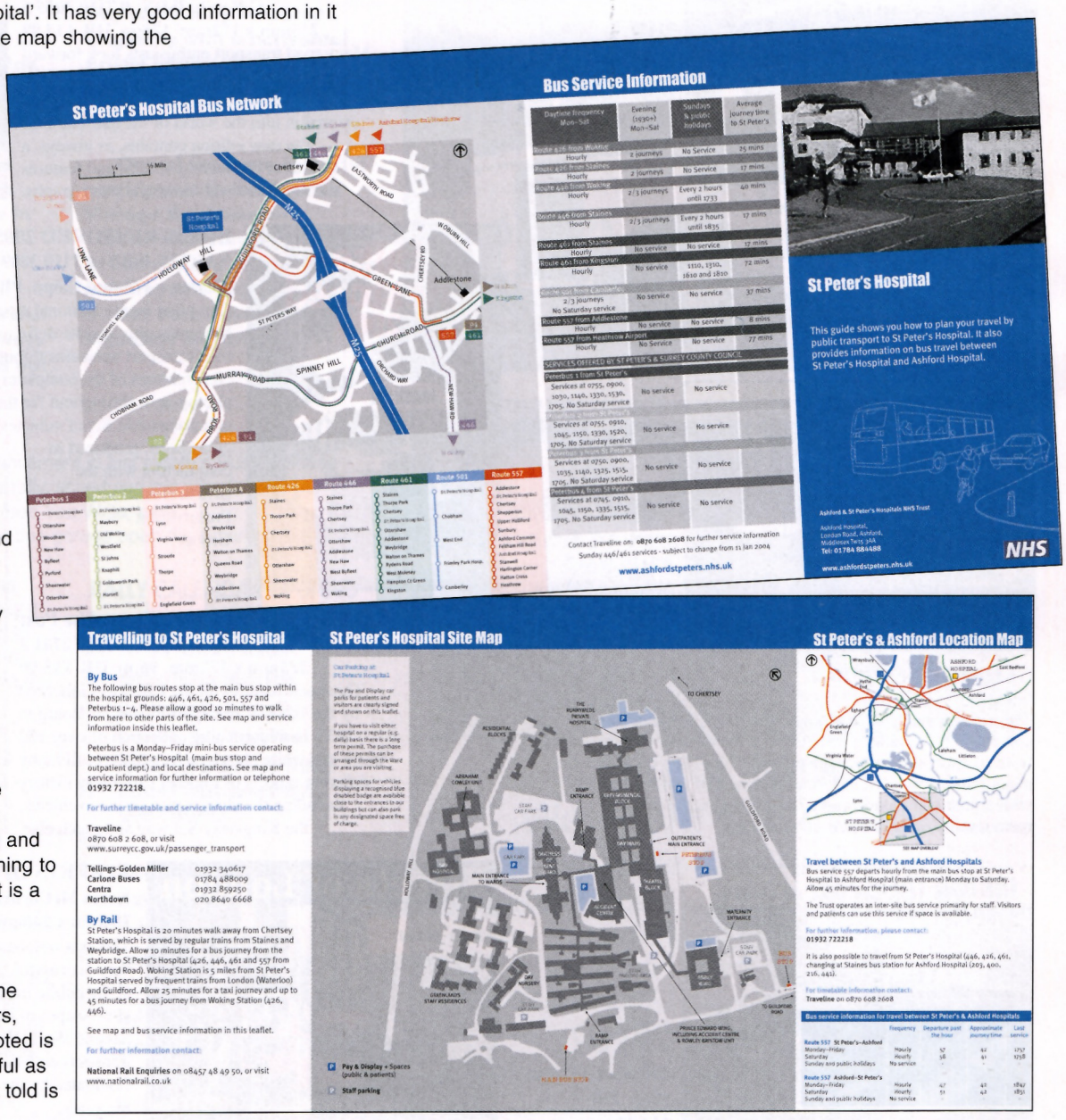
Each bus service is listed, with a frequency guide, and that includes the trust's own Peterbus network of four routes, each of which is based not on giving a sensible frequency but on what can be done with one minibus, giving an irregular and infrequent headway throughout the day. The main bus services are shown as hourly at best, and the guide doesn't show you that some combine to give you a reasonable frequency into Chertsey itself or to Staines.

'No service' is the main feature

What will really put off the potential user are the whole swathes of 'No service' that appear on it for the evening and Sunday services. Just the thing to confirm that public transport is a non-starter for getting to St Peter's, which for many unfortunately it is.

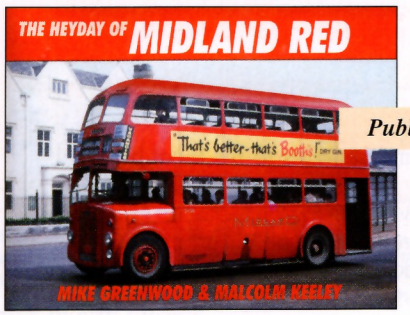
It helpfully gives you phone numbers for all the operators, though the only website quoted is Surrey's, which is quite useful as it happens. What you aren't told is which operator runs which services, though in fact apart from the odd few journeys from Camberley run by Carlone Buses, only Tellings-Golden Miller does and Northdown, whose number is shown, no longer runs anything anywhere. Slightly odd then that the cover features a line drawing of an Arriva Southern Counties East Lancs EL2000-bodied Dennis Dart, a type — and operator — long gone from the area.

It's quite a nice leaflet, and no doubt not a cheap one to produce. It appears to be a well-meaning attempt to show that the trust is serious about public transport (and a cynic might suggest that's to do with assuaging the complaints about lack of parking space). But it highlights rather than disguises the real problem, that for many there really isn't a viable public transport service, and certainly not if you want to visit someone in an evening or on a Sunday, which wouldn't seem to be an unreasonable aspiration. Hard luck if you want to visit, say, an elderly spouse who's been bunged in this remote hospital because there are no longer any facilities closer to home.


St Peter's Hospital Bus Network
Bus Service Information
St Peter's Hospital
This guide shows you how to plan your travel by public transport to St Peter's Hospital. It also provides information on bus travel between St Peter's Hospital and Ashford Hospital.
Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust
NHS
Travelling to St Peter's Hospital
By Bus
By Rail
St Peter's Hospital Site Map
St Peter's & Ashford Location Map
Travel between St Peter's and Ashford Hospitals

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (we want to hear about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Glasgow address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to **alan@millar1.demon.co.uk.**

New and Recently Published Road Transport Titles from Ian Allan Publishing



Published July

ISBN:
0 7110 3079 0
184mm x 240mm
80pp HB
£14.99

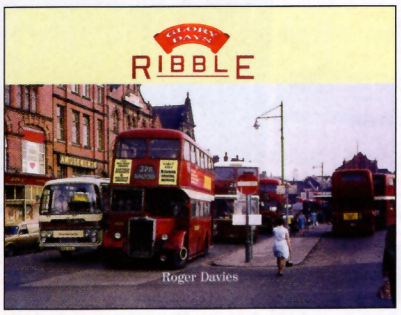
HEYDAY OF MIDLAND RED
M Greenwood & M Keeley

A celebration of one of Britain's greatest regional bus companies in some 85 superb colour illustrations portraying the company's operations and fleet in a period stretching from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s. The classic designs of Midland Red's own manufacture are prominently featured alongside those vehicles acquired in later years from outside contractors.

ISBN:
0 7110 3030 8
184mm x 240mm
96pp HB
£16.99

GLORY DAYS: EAST KENT
G Kraemer-Johnson & J Bishop

The book provides a detailed narrative of the company's history, operations and vehicles, from its formation in 1916 through to the late 1960s. Like the other titles in the 'Glory Days' series, it is illustrated with colour and black & white photographs throughout.



ISBN:
0 7110 3038 3
184mm x 240mm
112pp HB
£16.99

GLORY DAYS RIBBLE
G Davis

This is a comprehensive account of a fondly remembered company, its operations and vehicles, over a near 60-year period from its earliest days through to the 1970s. The book includes many reminisences from former Ribble staff and is illustrated with colour and monochrome illustrations and a range of memorabilia from Ribble's golden years.

ISBN:
0 7110 3073 1
235mm x 172mm
80pp HB
£14.99

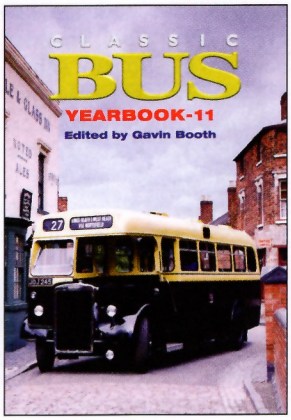
LONDON TRANSPORT IN COLOUR 1950-69
K McCormack

In over 80, mostly unpublished, colour illustrations, the author explores London Transport's surface and underground operations in these momentous years which saw the withdrawal of the trams and trolleybuses, the introduction of the Routemaster and the opening of the Victoria line, among many other topics.

Published June

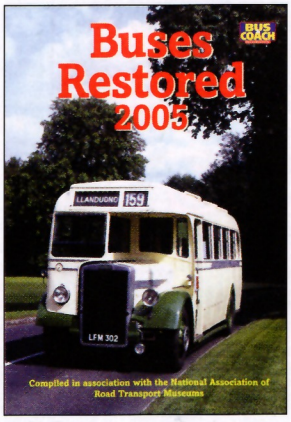
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STAGECOACH
D Jack ISBN: 0 7110 3103 7
280mm x 215mm 96pp HB £16.99

Founded in 1980, this is a comprehensive account of the history and operations of a company which has expanded far beyond its native Scotland. Benefitting from the deregulation of the bus industry and the privatisation of the railways, Stagecoach is now a major rail and bus operator in Britain and also has significant overseas interests stretching as far away as New Zealand.



CLASSIC BUS YEARBOOK 11
G Booth ISBN: 0 7110 3055 3
235mm x 172mm 128pp HB £14.99

Many road transport enthusiasts look forward eagerly each Spring to the publication of the latest edition of this popular annual excursion into the world of the half-cab bus. The new edition contains, as always, a wealth of fascinating articles and features and is packed with nostalgic photographs.

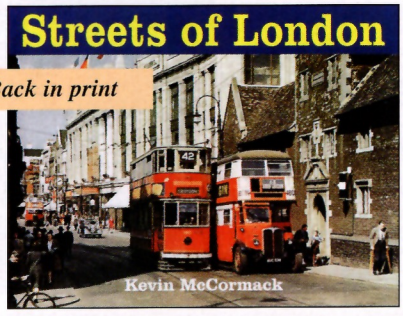


BUSES RESTORED 2005
NARTM ISBN: 0 7110 3089 8
235mm x 172mm 128pp PB £13.99

Compiled by the National Association of Road Transport Museums, this is a the definitive annual guide to the many road transport museums throughout the British Isles. New features of the completely revised 2005 edition are colour photographs throughout for the first time and a more comprehensive list of vehicles preserved, but not in collections, produced in conjunction with the British Bus Preservation Group.

LONDON'S TRAMS: A View From The Past
P Collins ISBN: 0 7110 2741 2
235mm x 172mm 96pp HB £15.99

This book features all the tramways inherited by the London Transport Passenger Board in 1933 in a fascinating collection of over 150 black and white photographs which recall many different aspects of London's tramway history including the change pits, service vehicles, the Kingsway Subway and much else.



Back in print

STREETS OF LONDON
Kevin McCormack ISBN: 0 7110 2774 9
184mm x 240mm 80pp PB £14.99

This is a welcome reprint of the first title in our very successful 'Streets of 'series. The book looks at the public transport scene and the changing streetscapes of the capital in the decades after the Second World War. This will appeal both to road transport enthusiasts and the wider public who are fascinated by the changes which have occured in the years.

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Preservation Update

1 **A classic Leyland Titan PD2/40 encounter at the Ribble Vehicle Preservation Trust's 'Brief Encounter 3' running day at Carnforth Station on 2 May. Park Royal-bodied Barrow Corporation 170 (CEO 957) meets Fishwick of Leyland 5 (528 CTF), with lowbridge Weymann Orion body. Both preserved buses were new in 1958.**
DAVE McALONE

2 **The first ECW-bodied Bristol LS prototype, Bristol Tramways 2800 (NHU 2) of 1951, was out and about at the Bristol Harbourside Rally & Running Day on 22 May. Powered originally with a horizontal Bristol engine, it was fitted later with a Gardner 5HLW.**
LEE TURTON

3 **One of the more colourful participants in the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's 10th anniversary open day at Lathalmond on 15 May was MacBrayne's 136 (GUS 926), a 1949 Park Royal-bodied Maudslay Marathon III.**
MURDOCH CURRIE

NO NORTH WEALD, NO HOLLOWAY EITHER

In case you missed the announcement in last month's *Buses*, please note that the North Weald bus rally, scheduled this year for Sunday 26 June, has been cancelled (see You Write, p44).

Also, one of the two London bus garage open days planned for the previous day has also been cancelled. Metroline says it has postponed its planned open day at Holloway until next year owing to 'unforeseen circumstances' and apologises to *Buses* readers for the short notice. However, Stagecoach's Waterden Road, Stratford open day is still going ahead on the same day, **Saturday 25 June**.

NEWCASTLE 501 FOR SANDTOFT

Newcastle 501 — the Northern Coachbuilders-bodied Sunbeam S7 six-wheeler normally kept at the Beamish open air museum — is to operate at the Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft over the summer.

It is going to Sandtoft primarily for the museum's North East Weekend on 20/21 August, but is also expected to operate at the Sandtoft Gathering on 30/31 July and again at the Six Wheel Weekend on 24/25 September.

RALLY CALENDAR UPDATES

JUNE

18/19 Swansea Festival of Transport.

19 Keighley Historic Vehicle Rally.
Deal Vintage Bus Running Day.
Brownhills, Staffs. Wiggly Worm Running Day at Chasewater Railway.

26 Blackpool. Totally Transport 2005, South Promenade.

JULY

3 Burton-upon-Trent Bus & Coach Rally.
Blackburn East Lancashire Rally, Ewood Park.

10 Lowestoft. Bus event, East Anglia Transport Museum.
Leyland, Lancs. Leyland Society gathering.
Dudley. Black Country Museum Vehicle Rally.
Knockholt Pound, Kent. GS-class running day.
Birmingham. Aston Manor Transport Museum open day and Outer Circle running day.

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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **VRs back in service at Arriva Cymru**
- **New double-deckers for Go-North East**
- **Ipswich buys another two London Leylands**
- **London United orders more OmniDekkas**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

Abus, Bristol

New here is the anticipated 90-seat 12m Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs H51/39F BU54 AJP, in white and light green for use on the contract to Asda at Longwell Green, Bristol. It entered service on 25 April.

Ace Travel, Aintree

Further ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians are A632 WDT, B961 ODU.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Helms of Eastham news is that Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties LVT 699V has been reunited with its original registration and has entered service. A further recent acquisition from Ireland is Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 91 G 6784.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander F303 JTY has been sold to Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk and Leyland Titan ANE 2T is with the Selnec Preservation Society.

Alpine, Llandudno

A new coach is Mercedes-Benz Touro AP05 ALP. Leyland Olympians UKY 627Y and A648 OCX are in service with JWR 137Y under preparation, while similar Olympians SHE 618Y and JNR 137Y have been repainted in schoolbus yellow. Two former Yorkshire Traction Olympians — one of them A654 OCX — are expected as open toppers.

Another ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 withdrawn is WDM 352R. VRs GRF 712V and FTU 386T, Leyland National KMA 396T and DAF A942 TYA have been sold for scrap and open-top Leyland Atlantean JPL 105K has been sold, with VTD 720S next to go.

APT, Rayleigh, Essex

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian FUM 483Y passed to Blythswood, Glasgow (dealer).

Arriva Cymru AA

Rhyl has reinstated ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 3992 (YMB 512W) as a spare for this season's open-top operations.

Dennis Dart 1326 (P826 RWU) has lost X32 branding, and the service is seeing regular substitutions for Wright Commanders.

The transfer away of Bangor's ex-Colchester Leyland Lynx 2 1750 (H130 LPU) has ended Lynx operation in South Cambria. The type is concentrated on Arriva North West at Crewe.

Volvo Olympian 3345 (R235 AEY) was on service 522 at Machynlleth for several days recently, after which 3343 (R343 AEY) suffered serious fire damage while operating on service 550. Accident-damaged Mercedes-Benz Vario 323 (R793 DUB), Lynx 1741 (G41 VME) and Leyland Olympian 3135 (F455 BKF) have gone for scrap. ECW-bodied Olympians 3069/86, 3121/8 (B969 WRN, B196 BLG, C211 GTU, C258 UAJ) have been stripped for spares.

Arriva London AA

Orders confirmed in May are for 102 10.2m double-deckers — the 32 VDL DB250LF/Wright Pulsar Geminis for route 19 and 70 Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis double-deckers, 22 9.4m and seven 10.2m Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart midibuses and 46 articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaros.

Delivery of the DB250LF/Pulsar Gemini H43/22D for the 19 was completed with DW112-4/8/9/21-34 (LJ05 BHU/V/W, BMV/Y, BNA/B/D-F/K/L, GKX-Z, GLF/K/V/Y).

Leyland Olympians L56, 65, (C56, 65 CHM), L147/50/61, 258 (D147 FYM etc) have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer); all Olympians in London Buses service are expected to go this year. L58, 150 have passed to Ipswich Buses. MCW Metrobuses sold to PVS, Barnsley (dealer) are M665, 718, 1319/24 (KYV 665, 718X, C319/24 BUV).

Arriva Midlands AA

Orders announced in May are for nine 10.8m Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts and one VDL SB4000XF/Van Hool coach.

Former Crosville Leyland Olympians are down to just three, 4516/27/8 (A132 SMA, B187/90 BLG) and open-top 4518 (A134 SMA) has lost its reason to be as Arriva has not been awarded the Leicester Tour this year, so its future is uncertain.

Former North Western Dennis Falcon/East Lancs 383/6 (G383/6 EKA) are out of service and are being cannibalised at Cannock.

Arriva North East AA

The orders announced in May, which include the Durham vehicles listed in May Fleet News, are for 16 Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts, 14 Scania OmniCity single-deckers and two 10.6m Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 double-deckers.

The loan of DAF SB120s 1918/9 (W78/9 PRG) to Arriva Scotland West has led to the transfer of Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 1601/2 (N701/3 GUM) to Redcar for service 64 (Middlesbrough-Redcar), Meanwhile, Mini Pointer Darts 1732/49 (V732 DNL, V749 ECU) have returned from Arriva Scotland West and have completed conversion of Hexham town services to low floor, displacing Optare MetroRiders 866/85/99 (M866 KCU, N885 RTN, P58 XTN) to Peterlee (866) or reserve (885/99).

The first Durham vehicles to go for refurbishment (at Arriva North West, Bootle) as part of the Overdrive project are DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige 4060/1 (S702/3 KFT). DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4012/20 (K412 BHN, L420 FHN) are officially listed as float vehicles for the Overdrive project.

Durham Bus Station has closed for refurbishment and all services use new stands in North Road and Milburngate.

Ex-London ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 7222 (D174 FYM) and Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 215 (YCU 870) are stored out of use at Ashington, while Duple-bodied Tiger 218 (F189 HKK) is stored at Alnwick. Having been taken towed away in early March, ECW-bodied Olympian 7214 (WDC 214Y) is back at Ashington, parked up alongside withdrawn Olympian 7267 (A567 NWX). DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4001 (G209 HCP) has been transferred to the disposal list from reserve.

The last two dual-purpose Olympians, 7268, 7302 (C268/4 XEF), are still used on primary services.

Arriva North West AA

New orders announced in May — which presumably include buses for Arriva Cymru and buses already delivered — are for 10 VDL SB200/Wright Commanders and 42 VDL SB120/Wright Cadet 10.8m midibuses. Other, as yet unconfirmed reports say that Speke is to get 27 Volvo B7TL double-deckers and at least three Scania OmniCity single-deckers, the latter for Liverpool Airport Express service 500, won recently from Selwyn, Runcorn.

At long last, Huyton has received former Arriva Southend Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 3354 (N709 TPK) has been received from loan to Arriva Yorkshire.

Optare Alero 612 (YP52 JWO) has been converted to automatic transmission.

Leyland Lynx 1719 (E49 WEM) has become a white driver trainer at Bootle. Bedford YNT 8176 (GEY 389Y) is allocated as a driver trainer in a pool capacity, as is Leyland National Greenway 8198 (PUK 652R). The previous 8189, a Leyland National 2, has been withdrawn at Bootle.

Leyland Olympian 3037 (B197 DTU) has gone to

Arriva Midlands. Leyland Lynx 1727 (F117 XTX) and Olympian 3257 (F257 YTJ) have gone for scrap.

Arriva Southend AA

Low-floor double-deck operation ceased on 10 May when the last Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400, 5443 (W443 XKX), was despatched to Luton in exchange for Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RZ/Alexander H47/32F 5092 (F642 LMJ) which entered service two days later. The newest double-deckers are 1993 Dennis Dominators 5286-8 (K36/7 XNE, K38 YVM); in Southend Corporation days, buses were replaced after 12 years.

A minor fleet renumbering was effected in early May, viz.:

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton 2188/91-3 (R188 DNM etc) are 1188-93, Dennis Dart/East Lancs 007-9 (L507-9 CPJ) are 3007-9 and DS24 (N544 TPK) is 3124; Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 3218/20-6 (T218, 820-6 NMJ) are 3318/20-6; Leyland Olympian/Alexander 907/8 (F577/8 SMJ) are 5807/8 and Dennis Dominator/East Lancs 5275 (G665 FKA) is 5277.

Dennis Lance SLF/Wright Pathfinders 5279/94 (M279 VPU, M764 JPA) are the only full-sized single-deckers in service in the Southend area following withdrawal of First Essex's last Leyland Lynxes and are among only 14 low-floor buses with Arriva Southend.

Maintenance work ceased for Network Colchester and that for Arriva Grays is now taken care of by Arriva Southern Counties at Northfleet.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

The remnants of the alphanumeric London Transport Country Area fleetnumbering system have been laid to rest, and all buses are numbered into a single four-digit sequence inherited from Maidstone & District. Dennis Dominators DD13-5 are 5213-5, Darts DS19, 22 are 3019, 3122, Dart SLFs DSL25-33/5-7/47/50/3, 68/9, 74/80-102/9/10 are 3025 etc, DSL103 is 3003, DSL104-6 are 3304-6, DSL591/2 are 3591/2, Dennis Lances LSL8, LS21/3/4 are 3018/21/3/4, MCW Metrobuses M1263/75/80 are 5263/75/80 and Volvo B6s V203/4 are 3603/4.

Buses with E-prefixes have lost them, although Dart E3405 (P325 HVX) has been disposed of, and DAF SB120s E4500-13 are 3500-13. Driver trainers are prefixed T instead of YDT and ferry buses are F rather than YFB.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

Group orders announced in May are for 19 Scania L94UB/Wright Solar single-deckers, two Optare Solo M950s, the seven recently delivered Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban single-deckers and the already announced order for five VDL SB4000XF/Van Hool Alicron accessible Green Line coaches.

Alexander Dennis Darts 3808-10 are correctly SN54 GPK/O/U.

Now in stock are the last Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H47/31F due from Arriva Southend, 5443/51 (W443/51 XKX), with Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type 5092 (F642 LMJ) passing the opposite way after repainting.

Withdrawn are ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 5854/6 (D167/9 FYM) and fire-damaged Volvo B6/Northern Counties 3125 (M725 OMJ). The first ex-Sovereign bus noted in Arriva livery is Volvo B10B/Wright Renown 3845.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

Mercedes-Benz Citaro O530/B42F demonstrator BX54 ECV was followed on loan by articulated demonstrator BU53 ZWV, the latter operated for a short time from Belle Isle in connection with guests for a visit by the Queen, but not in passenger service.

The seating capacity of DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige 438 (R28 GNW) is **B41F**.

Leyland Olympian 517 (CWR 517Y), undergoing conversion into a driver trainer, has been renumbered 329 in the Leyland Lynx series.

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 202/14 (V202/14 PCX), used on Yorkshire Dales Bike Bus services, were re-registered A1, 2 YBG respectively, taken from DAF SB3000/Van Hool coaches before their sale in June 2003 and held on retention since then.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 5419 (N709 TPK) has gone to its rightful new owner, Arriva North West, after a long stay at Heckmondwike.

Withdrawn are Leyland Lynx 2s 359/62/6/70/5/7/80 (H359 WWY, J362/6/70 YWX, J375/7 AWT, J380 BWU), leaving only nine Lynxes in service at Castleford — 344/58/61/3/5/76/9/81/2 (H344 UWX, H358/93 WWY, J363/5 YWX, J376 AWT, J379/81/2 BWU). Also withdrawn is 569 (A569 NWX), the last Leyland Olympian based at Heckmondwike, which has also lost Optare MetroRider 748 (M748 WWR).

Lynxes 336/7/40-3/6/7/53/4/6/7/60 (H336/7 TYG, H340-2 UWT, H343/6/7 UWX, H756/7 WWW, H356/7 WWX, H460 WWY) have been sold to Durbin, Patchway, 364/7/9/71/4/8 (J364/7/9/71 AWX, J374/1 AWT) to Gemini, Birchgrove and 368/73/80 (J368 YWX, J373 AWT, J380 BWU) to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer). 368/73 have subsequently appeared in Ireland with Ardee Coaches. Lynxes 335/65 (H335 TYG, J365 YWX) have been stripped for spares at Castleford. Volvo B10M-50 Citybuses 763/4 (G619/20 BPH) are with Red Kite, Tilsworth.

Above: After only four years, Arriva Southend ceased operating low-floor double-deckers when Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Trident 5443 (W443 XKX), seen on its last day in service, was transferred to Arriva the Shires & Essex in exchange for a 16-year-old Leyland Olympian. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Two more Dennis Lance SLF/Berkhof from McKindless, Wishaw are 174 and 200 (WIL 9216/7; *M966 SDP, M197 UAN*).

Barnsley & District YT

Former Keighley & District Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B47F T545-7 AUA have been acquired.

Beachy Head Bus Company, Bexhill

This company is using Leyland Olympian/ECW B204 DTU in a pink and purple livery, supplied via Stephenson, Rochford.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre

The last of the initial batch of Optare Solos, W83/6 NDW, have been sold.

Berwyn, Trefor

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount SIL 4466 is a recent acquisition. Bristol VRT/SL3 XNV 885S is back in use.

Birmingham Motor Traction

Rental Dennis Dart SLF V322 CVV is still on loan.

BL Travel, Royston, S. Yorks

The first full-size service buses are Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader 2 B37F V453 NGA, V493 NOH. V453 NGA was new to Whitelaw, Stonehouse and V493 NOH was a Volvo demonstrator.

Blackburn Transport

Nottingham City Transport Scania OmniDekka N94UD/East Lancs 202 was on trial for two weeks and a Reading Scania appeared here for a week.

The Dennis Trident/East Lancs Myllennium Lolynes 1-5 (PN52 XKF-H/J/K) have been registered BCB 340, 428 EXA, 213 ONU, LUF 549 and PCB 24 respectively — marks previously carried by the now sold coach fleet.

Leyland Titans 97/8, 100 (KYV 517/08X, KYN 306X) were due to go into storage before service alterations on 6 June. Volvo B6/East Lancs 534/6 (M534/6 RCW) have been repainted into latest livery, 533 (M533 RCW) following, as is Optare MetroRider 637 (P637 ARN).

Blackpool Transport

Fifteen Leyland Atlanteans remain licensed in traditional green/cream livery, East Lancs-bodied 350-2 (GHG 350W, UHG 351/2Y) remaining in service during April. All are intended solely for schools, while 922/3 (URN 322/3V) are driver trainers with their upper deck windows removed and the area panelled over. Assuming current contracts are retained, Atlanteans will run until at least summer 2006.

continued overleaf...

Below: V493 NOH, the ex-demonstrator Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6BLE acquired by BL Travel of Royston. NIGEL BLAIR

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
SG Staus Bus & Coach Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II 374/6/7 (M374/6/7 SCK) have been partially repainted in 'pool' black/yellow to match 375, leaving only 378/9 (M378/9 SCK) in Line 11 livery. Seasonal Promenade Line 1 and Line 20 are again in operation, using Olympians 401-10, with Schools+1/20 branding.

Further to May Fleet News, delicensed 511 (S511 LHG) is an Optare MetroRider, not a DAF SB220/Optare Delta.

All routes now have their own livery (unlike any other major UK operator) and the Metro Coastline network is gaining increased patronage.

Black Prince, Morley

Former Newport Scania N113 34 (C34 ETG) has been withdrawn.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

Six Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs are understood to be on order. The latest addition to heritage stock is ex-London Transport AEC Regent III RT1389 (KXW 488), latterly with the Dover Transport Museum. Mostly complete, a decision has yet to be taken on its future.

Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith

Ex-Trent Barton Dennis Lance 11SDA3113/Optare Sigma B46F N358/9 VRC are in stock.

Brighton & Hove GA

Scania OmniDekka 616 (GX03 SSV) has been fitted experimentally with a front numeral display to match the colour of the branded route on which it works — so 1 is pink, 25 green and 49 blue.

Due for imminent withdrawal are Scania N113/East Lancs 719/21/3/4/30 (F719 LFG, G721/3/4/30 RYJ) and Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Excalibur 501 (R501 HUF).

Brown, Ely

More acquisitions are MCW Metrobus A745 THV, Plaxton-bodied DAF coaches J140/1 NJO. Ex-Stagecoach Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander K355 ANV is also in service.

Brylaine, Boston

Optare Solo YJ05 JXK is new.

Bugler, Bristol

Optare Solo M850 YJ05 WCU has been at work on service 500 (Baltic Wharf-Temple Meads-Central Bristol circular).

Burton, Haverhill TGM

New are Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther EU/UK05 BCL.

Cardiff Bus

Volvo Ailsa B55-10s 411/5/7/25/32/5/49/52/4/5 have been repainted in older-style orange livery. Optare MetroRiders 103/6 (L103/6 GBO), 110/6/23-5/7/9 (M110/6/23-5/7/9 KBO) and 139 (N139 PTG) are together again with Thomson, Glasgow and 104/18 (L104 GBO, M118 KBO) and DP-seated 107 (M107 JHB) are withdrawn.

Camm, Nottingham

MCW Metrobus/H46/31F F801-6 YLV — new to Merseybus — have been acquired from Centrebus, Leicester.

Right: Among the vehicles that Dunn-Line has hired from MASS Engineering to operate the business taken over in Lincoln are three Brightbus-branded Leyland Olympian tri-axle schoolbuses with 122-seat Alexander bodies. Like the others, TIL 6572 was new to Kowloon Motor Bus in Hong Kong. ANDY IZATT

Cass, Moreton, Wirral

An acquisition from Stagecoach Manchester is Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties C174 YBA.

Castle Garages, Carmarthen

Mercedes-Benz minibus M712 YJC is in use on service 279 (Carmarthen-Llandeilo).

Centra Passenger Services

A notable acquisition from Alexander Dennis is EV1 (SN04 EFH), a TransBus Enviro300 for a school service in Surrey.

Centrebus, Leicester

Ex-MK Metro Mercedes Benz 811D/Marshall B27F K949 OEM is reported at Grantham. MCW£ Metrobuses F801-6 YLV have gone to Camm, Nottingham.

Chenery, Dickleburgh, Norfolk

New coaches are Volvo B12B-62/Jonckheere Mistral FJ05 AOV-X.

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne

New Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 GN54 SVF/G are in stock, along with Vario O810D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F P848/50 YGB, previously with National Car Parks at Glasgow Airport.

ChesterBus

As reported in last month's Fleet in Focus, Chester City Transport was rebranded as ChesterBus on 4 April, with the blue and cream low-floor livery replacing maroon/cream as the standard style.

Four zones have been created, Zone 1: services to Blacon and Saughall; Zone 2: Vicars Cross, Pipers Ash and Guilden Sutton; Zone 3: Great Boughton, Christleton, Waverton and Huntington and Zone 4: Handbridge, Lache and Eccleston.

Leyland Olympian 11 (F882 VSJ) has been reinstated.

A planning application has been lodged to build 23 houses and 90 flats on the depot site and adjoining YMCA building. The Bus Exchange is due to close next year, with free shuttle busses linking 'super bus stops' at Gorse Stacks, Frodsham Street, Delamere Street, George Street and City Road until the replacement bus station opens in 2007. The associated Northgate scheme is expected to be completed in 2009.

Below: Centra 300 EV1 (SN04 EFH), the TransBus-built Enviro300 bought to operate school service 803, in Thames Ditton. It is the first Enviro300 to operate in Surrey. GEOFF RIXON

Chesterfield Community Transport

On order are an Iveco Daily 50C13/Minibus Options B15FL and two Mercedes-Benz Varios with Frank Guy B16FL bodywork. Mercedes-Benz O814D/Frank Guy B28FL FJ54 WDZ has replaced Mellor-bodied Ford Transit CT1 (R351 MPY). An acquisition is Mercedes 611D/Frank Guy B16FL CT20 (P298 MWE) from Amber Valley Community Transport, while the previous CT20, a UVG-bodied Mercedes Benz, was replaced by a Toyota Hi-Ace 300GS, which lasted until February this year. Also in stock are Mercedes Benz/Frank Guy CT24/5 (R152 TWF, N775 XAU), B16FL and B15FL respectively and ex-Leonard Cheshire Home, Chesterfield and Bucky Community Transport.

CT10/4 are confirmed as YN03 ULD/C, Mercedes-Benz/UVG CT18 as KF52 UAW and CT23 (FJ54 WEA) is a Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D.

City Sightseeing EB

As these notes were completed, the first two 'half-top' Ayats-bodied Volvo B7Ls were delivered for Bath. These are the first new partial open-toppers built for use anywhere in the world. The part-covered examples at Bath are 272/3 (EU05 VBG/J), while another full open-topper there is 372 (EU05 BZM).

Clynnog & Trevor, Trefor

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A508 EJF has been acquired from Arriva Fox County and re-registered TIL 2048, although it has also been reported as TIL 2047. Former Arriva the Shires & Essex Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount SIB 7481 (*E326 OMG*) is also here.

ECW-bodied Olympian AEF 222Y has been cannibalised, but ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 LFJ 874W is reinstated.

Compass Royston, Stockton

Mercedes-Benz L608D C401 VVN — the first Mercedes minibus for United Auto — is for sale; interested parties should ring Gary Walton on 01642 606644.

Cumfy Bus, Southport

Former GM Buses South (Birkenhead & District) Leyland Fleetline ANA 21T has gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

D&G, Adderley Green

Crewe FlexiRider began on 4 April, usually using one of two Bluebird-bodied Volkswagen LTs, one of which is YX05 FFY. New service 222 (Crewe-Leighton Hospital) was launched by Optare Solo 65 (YJ54 XYB). Unnumbered Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver T448 EBD has been on loan to cover for teething matters with the new Solos.

Dhillon, London

Bharat Travel, Southall has changed its trading name to Dhillon of London with a new corporate image designed by Ray Stenning of Best Impressions.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

Further to last month's News item, the MASS Lincoln operation was acquired on 10 May. The company advises that it is keeping Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B33F K586 MGT, Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B30F S782 FFW, Optare MetroRider/B31F N157 BOF, N269/70 XOJ and N91 WOM, plus Optare Solo/B34F YN04 LWP/R-U.

Also acquired but not being retained are Dart K589 MGT, MAN/Optare Vecta N290 DWY, MetroRiders

N156 BOF, N93 WOM and N468 WDA, DAF-repowered Leyland Nationals ACH 504T, EPT 879S, JRB 684T, PHW 987S and UFX 849S, plus Volvo-repowered Leyland National 2s FTN 699, 706/13W.

Eagle & Crawford, Mold

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 YMB 509W has been sold to Griffiths, Felinheli.

East Yorkshire EY

Three of the Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types that were new to the original Stagecoach Manchester and came to EYMS via Finglands, 220-2 (M420-2 RRN), are being converted into driver trainers.

Vehicles sold to Carl Ireland are Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 18 (A824 JEC) and Leyland Olympians 543/4 (JTY 396X, SPY 209X), while Volvo B10M/Van Hool 88 (D637 MSJ) and B10M/Plaxton 145 (C96 JAT) have gone to Direct Coach Sales.

Edwards, Llantwit Fardre

Bova Futuras WA54 HYF/G were not delivered to this operator. Setra S415 BX04 NBE has passed to EvoBus (dealer), Coventry.

Epsom Buses

Having turned to Optare Solos, this operator is reverting to buy five Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts shortly, with two more expected in September.

Express Motors, Penygroes

A surprise here is the planned operation of an open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 on new summer service S96 (Morfa Bychan-Porthmadog-Beddgelert-Rhyd Ddu).

Fargo, Rayne, Essex

ECW-bodied Leyland Atlantean LRB 582W has been sold, while MCW Metrobus C959 LWJ and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A592 NWX have been acquired.

First Bristol FG

The local press suggests 20 new double-deckers are expected for services 75/75A (Cribbs Causeway-Hartcliffe) in the autumn. However, the report of an order for 100 Scania double-deckers in November 2004 Fleet News appears to have been false.

Ex-First West Yorkshire Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verdes continue to arrive, including 60950/2/75/7 (M412/4, 437/9 VWW). They are receiving orange LED electronic destination displays before use, principally on services 6 and 7. Nineteen ex-First London Volvo Olympians from Uxbridge are due for Lawrence Hill, apparently for service 1.

Leyland Lynxes are being withdrawn as their MoT certificates expire, hence the hurried arrival of Lances. Lynxes withdrawn are 62563 (H613 YTC), 62614/6/8/22/32 (F614 RTC etc) and 62633/4/6/9-51/3-5/7 (H633 YHT etc).

A one-day exhibition of the Volvo B7LA/Wright StreetCar prototype is expected in September.

First Coaches FG

Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliners 20513/34 (WX51 AKY, WX03 ZFG) have gone to First Cymru.

First Cymru FG

Twenty-one of the wheelchair accessible Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile coaches ordered by First are due here, primarily for the half-hourly Swansea-Cardiff shuttle and the X11 (Swansea-Camarthen), which runs every 20min.

In from First Devon & Cornwall are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 20411 (S311 SCV) and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Expressliner C49Ft 21097 (R297 AYB), while B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner C44Ft 20513/34 (WX51 AKY, WX03 ZFG) have come from First Coaches.

The first of a batch of Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F from First Somerset & Avon is 42304 (P304 AUM). Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver B23F 50256/7 (M257/8 VWU) have come from First West Yorkshire.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45307 (JDZ 2307) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset, 45322 (JDZ 2322) to South Yorkshire.

Withdrawn are Duple 425 21285 (F135 DEP), Leyland Olympian/Alexander 30700 (G615 OWR), ECW-bodied 34800 (C907 FCY), Roe-bodied 34643 (CUB 43Y), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45301/2/4/15/6/80 (JDZ 2301 etc) and fire-damaged Plaxton-bodied 46566 (N566 UCY), Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander 50451 (N686 WLS) and Mellor-bodied 811D 51257 (M257 CDE). A decision is awaited about the future of fire-damaged Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner 20429 (S104 JGB).

First Devon & Cornwall FG

Rail replacement between Newton Abbott and Paignton in February saw the use of new First Leicester Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse 32639-41 (KP54 AZA-C) and First West Yorkshire 32634/5 (YJ54 XUB/C).

Withdrawn for transfer elsewhere are Dennis Javelins 21132/3 (N232/3 WFJ), Volvo Olympian/Alexander 34287/9/91 (P189/91 TGD) and Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 42429/41/2/7 (P429 ORL, P441/2/7 TCV); 34287/9 have gone to First Wyvern. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 20411 (S311 SCV) and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Expressliner 21097 (R297 AYB) have been transferred to First Cymru, Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34294 (P294 KPX) has gone to First Manchester and Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C49Ft 62265 (ESK 257, *N107 VKS*) to Hampshire & Dorset.

The PSV Circle reports the sale of Leyland Atlantean 38328 (URS 328X), Bristol VRT 38767 (BEP 968V), Mercedes-Benz 811D 50492 (G152 GOL), Mercedes 709D 50748 (J148 SJT), Mercedes 811Ds 50831/6 (K331/6 OAF), 50849/50/3/4 (K349 ORL etc), Mercedes 709Ds 50903/5-7 (K603/5-7 ORL), Mercedes 811Ds 50954/5 (K754/5 XTA), 51169 (L69 EPR) and 51389/90 (M769/4 FTT).

First Eastern Counties FG

New Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse B43F 69009 (AU05 DMX) appeared as 60069, as its fleetnumber was applied upside down.

Further Dennis Darts at Norwich are ex-First Manchester Marshall DP39F-bodied 40288-91 (M944/6-8 SRE), new to PMT. Dart/Alexander Dash 47249 (M249 VWW) is back in service at Norwich.

First Essex FG

Optare Solo demonstrator YJ54 BTE worked Harwich town services 20/22 during its stay, using national fleetnumber 90246 (from a withdrawn ancillary vehicle).

An Overground network was launched in Colchester on 11 April, covering routes 61 (orange), 64/A (blue), 65 (red), 66/A (green) and 77/78 (purple). The former service 42 Alexander-bodied Darts did not enter service on the 66/A until 21 April. Overground branding is carried by Volvo Olympians 34011/3/4/8, Dennis Dart/Alexander ALX200s 43715/6/39-44, Scania/Wright 62406/7/9/10 and 65650-4/78/86-92, while newly repainted Dennis Lances 67001-3 will be used on 67/A (turquoise). 67002 is the first vehicle repainted from Barbie 2 into the now standard Barbie livery.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 51468 (M668 VJN) has been reinstated at Clacton. The last 709Ds at Hadleigh, 51806/8/9 (P406 HPU etc), have been transferred to reserve (51806/9) and Braintree (51808), replaced by Plaxton-bodied Darts 46179-82 (N979-82 EHJ) from Basildon. The entire Southend network is served by Darts, the newest of which is eight years old. The handful of Olympians appears only at peaks and on schools.

By May, Leyland Lynxes 62506/11 (F406 LTW, F411 MJN) and driver trainer 90242 (F413 MJN) were delicensed for disposal, 62520/4 (F420/4 MJN) were at Basildon as temporary driver trainers, 62521/2 held at Basildon in reserve, with 90244/5 (F427/8 MJN) at Chelmsford as driver trainers. Lynx driver trainer 90242 (F413 MNO) was being cannibalised in late-April, when new additions to 'death row' at Clacton were Leyland Olympian 34660 (B960 WRN), Dart 46114 (K914 CVW) and 709Ds 51470, 51779/81, 51806 (M670 VJN, P679/81, 406 HPU). Lynxes 62523/9 (F423/9 MJN) have gone to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Dual-purpose ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 34810/4 (C410/4 HJN) have gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart B35F 42728 (T728 REU) and ex-demonstrator Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus B40F 42350 (W909 VMA) have come from First Somerset & Avon. Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW DPH42/30F 34810/4 (C410/4 HJN) have come from First Essex, while Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C49Ft 62265 (ESK 257, *N107 VKS*) is from Devon & Cornwall.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34059 (P559 EFL) is understood to be staying at Southampton and has not been transferred to First Manchester.

First Leicester FG

All the new Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis, 32639-50 (KP54 AZA-D/F/G/J/L/N, KBK/N/O) are in service. Also new are Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 66972-82/4-7 (KX05 AOC-E, MGY/Z, MHA/E/F/J-L/N/O/U/V).

The last, unpopular, Volvo B6s — Alexander-bodied 48002/3/5/6/45/6 (L102/4/5/6 PWR, N345/6 CJA) — have been withdrawn; 48004 (L104 PWR) has gone to First Glasgow.

Leyland Lynx 62715 (G115 HNP) is out of use with accident damage.

A significant Leicester vehicle scrapped in April was prototype Dennis Falcon/Duple Dominant 90 (PJU 90W). After stints with Stephenson, Rochford, both as operator and in dealer capacity, it ended up in Ireland, re-registered 81 CE 443.

First London FG

Volvo Olympians 34101-3 (T901-3 KLF) have gone to First South Yorkshire.

First Manchester FG

Further articulated Scania OmniCity CN94UA/AB58D noted at Bury are 12002-4/6-10 (YN05 GYB/H/J/D-G/K), while more Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F at Oldham are 66794/8/9 (MX05 CBF, CCA/D).

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/30F 34294 (P294 KPX) has come from First Devon & Cornwall, but similar 34059 (P559 EFL) is understood to be staying with First Hampshire & Dorset.

Many vehicles are being fitted with Hanover LED electronic destination displays.

Volvo B10LA/Wright Fusion AB55D 10044/5 (V601/2 GGB) returned to First Glasgow by May.

continued overleaf...

Right: First Manchester 66795 (MX05 CBU), one of 140 Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs that are already beginning to remove life-expired double-deckers from the fleet. It carries the latest style of First route branding over the rearward windows.
PHIL HALEWOOD

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
SG Stagecoach Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings-Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Dennis Dart/Marshall 40288-91 (M944/6-8 SRE) have been transferred to First Eastern Counties.

With echoes of recent events in London, Mercedes-Benz Citaro 60263 (W341 RJA) caught fire and has been withdrawn.

Also withdrawn are Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 30006 (C228 ENE), 30124/51/76 (B108 SJA, C190 YBA, C244 EVU), MCW Metrobus/Northern Counties 30287/9, 30300 (D304/6 JVR, D318 LNB), all-MCW Metrobus MkIIs 30303/5-7/9-11/3/4/7/8/22/4/9/35 (G385/8 OGD, F601/3-5 XWY, G390/2/5/6, 400/5 OGD, F279/88 NHJ) and Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 60289 (G64 RND). Of these, 30176, 30287/9 have been sold to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Leyland Olympians 30008/85, 30128/9 (C194 YBA, JHU 907X, B113 SJA, B116 TVU), Metrobuses 30289, 30301/21/30/2 (D306 JVR, D319 LNB, G399 OGD, F280/1 NHJ), Mercedes-Benz 811D 50124 (M161 LNC) and Mercedes 709Ds 50130-40/2/3/5/6/50/1 (M234/7-9/48/11/8/47/5/23/09/15/07/29/31 VWU, N176/7 WNF) have all been sold. Leyland Lynx 60451 (D501 LNA) has gone to the Selnec Preservation Society.

First Northampton FG

New are Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 66962/4/7-70 (KX05 MHY, KX05 MJE/K/O//U/X). Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra 66042 (N42 RRP) is back in service.

More Volvo Citybuses transferred to First Edinburgh are East Lancs-bodied 38021 (D101 XNV) and Alexander-bodied 38086/91/6 (F86 XBD, H291 VRP, J296 GNV).

Not previously recorded, loaned First Leicester Volvo B7L 66301 (KV02 VVC) was exchanged for 66315 (KV02 VVT) in February.

First Potteries FG

Scania N113CRL/Wright Endurance B49F 62339 (N572 VMS) was transferred from First Edinburgh in April.

First Somerset & Avon FG

The Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart deliveries were completed by 10.6m/B37F 42092/4-6 (WX05 RVK/M-O). More B26F Optare Solo M850 SlimLines to replace Mercedes-Benz 709Ds on Bath City services 2, 4, 6 and 7 are 53809-20 (WX05 RSZ, RTO/U/V/Z, RUA/C/J/O/R/U/V).

All three former Aircoach, Dublin, Volvo B7LA/Wright Eclipse Fusion artics, 10151-3 (Y644/2/3 AVV; *00 D 31079, 01 D 38300, 40134*) are in service at Bath.

Recent withdrawals include step-entrance Dennis Darts 45370/5, 46206/12-4 (JDZ 2370/5, L206 SHW, L212-4 VHU), some of the older Dart SLFs, 42302-5, 42427, 42626/33, 42727/8 (P302-5 AUM, P427 ORL, P826/33 YUM, T727/8 REU), while 42634 (P834 YUM) has been withdrawn at Bath with fire damage. 42304 (P304 AUM) is the first of several to go to First Cymru and 42728 (T728 REU) and Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dart SLF 42350 (W909 VMA) have gone to First Hampshire & Dorset, while Dennis Lance SLFs 67337/8/40-2 (M137 FAE etc) went to First Wyvern, although it is understood that 67338/40/2 were returned as unfit.

Leyland Olympians 34511/32 (JHU 911X, LWS 32Y), 34709 (A809 THW), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50829/70 (K29 OEU, K434 XRF), 50971-6/91 (K871-6 NEU, K691 UFV), 51087 (L887 VHT) and Volvo B10M/Van Hool 66601 (D601 GHY) have been withdrawn. 709D 51019 (L819 SAE) has been scrapped.

Thanks are due to Stagecoach Southdown for returning Julian Osborne's glasses (Service Extra last month refers), as he was able to confirm that 66174 transferred from Hampshire & Dorset is registered W374 EOW and not as shown last month.

First South Yorkshire FG

From First CentreWest have come Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine H47/27D 34101-3 (T991-3 KLF). There are suggestions that the 16 Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Arrows with First West Yorkshire, 30579-88, 31902-6/15 (P401/7-12 PLE, P413/4/6 MTW, P402-6 PLE, P415 MTW) will be reallocated here in exchange for ex-London dual-door Olympians.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus B30F 45322 (JDZ 2322) has come from First Cymru.

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 60475 (G630 NWA) has been reinstated at Olive Grove. Volvo B7TL 31140 (YU52 VYR) has been out of use after a collision with a milk tanker.

Leyland Lynx 60095 (H86 GRE) is in use as a driver trainer, while the commercial unit has been converting former First Wyvern Lynxes 62703/5/8/9 (G103 HNP etc) for this purpose. An addition to the trainer pool here is Lynx LX2R11C15Z4R 62728 (G128 HNP), in corporate colours but lacking willow leaf motif.

Dennis Dominator 30432 (UWJ 284Y) has gone into reserve, along with Mercedes-Benz 50191 (R124 XDT). Dominators 30490/6/7 (C880 JWE etc) are also now out of service and 30483 (C872 JWE) is back after a short period stood down.

Former Ipswich Dennis Falcon driver trainer 90095 (C111 SDX) has been withdrawn.

First West Yorkshire FG

Further new Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urbans at Huddersfield are 66762/7 (YJ05 VVD/K). Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32542 is still registered YJ54 XVL.

BMC 1100FE schoolbuses 68515-7/20/2-5/40 are in service, 68524 (YJ54 GZE) confirmed at Todmorden and 68540 (YJ05 PUX) at Huddersfield. They are B55FL rather than B60F.

Leyland Olympian 90065 (GUG 547N) is the sole tree-lopper in First West Yorkshire, its mobile ticket office function having been taken by Leyland Olympian 30601 (CUB 37Y), still in corporate livery. Olympian 30598 (CUB 33Y) is a permanent driver trainer at Bramley. Leyland Atlantean former driver trainer 90077 (WNW 159S) has passed to Roadrunner Bus & Coach, Acaster Malbus Airfield near York, which also owns former Leeds City Transport AEC Swift 1070.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50256/7 (M257/8 VWU) have been transferred to First Cymru. More Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde sent to First Bristol are 60950/2/75/7 (M412/4, 437/9 VWW).

PVS, Carlton (dealer) has taken Leyland Olympians 30596/7 (CUB 27, 32Y), Atlantean driver trainers 90046 (XWG 624T) and, sadly, 30-year old 90054 (LUG 115P) for scrap, the last having originally been sold to the Huddersfield Transport Museum last December but not collected.

The Transport Tribunal has overturned the traffic commissioner's decision to cut the licence allocation (*Buses* May refers).

First Wyvern FG

The next deliveries of Alexander Dennis Enviro300s have started, with vehicles going into store at Leicester. Those delivered so far include 67656-8 (VX05 LVW/Y/Z) for services 44 (Worcester-Great Malvern) and 144 (Worcester-Birmingham) services.

New Worcestershire County Council-owned Optare Solo M920/B31F in turquoise/orange Flexilink livery are numbered 1722/3 (VX05 HPP/U) rather than in First's national series. They are based at Kidderminster.

This fleet is to receive all of First's Dennis Lance SLFs. Wright Pathfinder B37F-bodied 67337/8/40-2 (M137 FAE etc) have been received from First Somerset & Avon, although all but 67337/41 were returned as they were unfit for service. Further ex-Glasgow double-deckers are Volvo Olympian YN2RV18V3/Alexander RL-type H47/32F 34287/9 (P187/9 TGD) from First Devon & Cornwall.

Leyland Lynx 62722 (G122 HNP) has been withdrawn.

First York FG

Twelve Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis are due later this year, to oust Alexander ALX400-bodied 30954-65. New Volvo B7RLEs 69000-4 (YK54 ENP/L-O) are B43F, not DP43F.

Leyland Lynx LX112L10ZR1/B51F driver trainers 62461 (F361 YTJ) and LX2R11C15Z4R/B49F 62725 (G125 HNP) are here following conversion at the Rotherham engineering works.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

A third new vehicle new here is Scania/Irizar S-Kool C70F AA05 GHA. Another ex-Stagecoach North West vehicle damaged in the floods at Carlisle, Leyland Olympian/Alexander DP K129 DAO, has been acquired, and three more Olympians are expected from this source. Considerable work will be undertaken before they enter service.

Glenvale Transport, Liverpool

MCW Metrobus 1333 (C333 BUV) has been scrapped.

Glover, Ashbourne

Additions are Leyland Tiger/Plaxton C53F C808 FMC and Volvo B10M/Plaxton C53F N763 AHP.

Go North East GA

The three new Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers for service X10 (Newcastle-Middlesbrough), 3941-3 (NK05 GZO/P/R) were delivered in time for the service being relaunched on 13 June.

Two more Volvo B6/Alexander Dash reinstated are 8414/7 (L414/7 KEF), both at Bishop Auckland.

Griffiths, Y Felinheli

An acquisition from Eagles & Crawford, Mold is former Crosville Bristol VRT/SL3 YMB 509W, still in its former owner's livery, while VR CWU 324T has passed to Williams, Deiniolen.

Halifax Bus Company

Recent acquisitions are Iveco Daily 49.10/UVG B19F P628 ROU and LDV Convoy/UVG B16F R812 UOK.

Halifax Joint Committee, Halifax

The current operating fleet is understood to comprise MCW Metrobuses LOA 408X, BYX 217/48/77V, KYO 624X, KYV 643, 730/93X, OJD 816Y, B162/96, 203/17/90 WUL, C424 BUV, Leyland Olympian F234 YTJ and Dennis Darts G503 VYE, H138 MOB, J602/7 KCU, K414 MGN, K985/93/5 CBO. Metrobus 161 (JHE 161W) has gone to a preservationist in Cumbernauld.

Halton Transport

The PSV Circle reports the arrival of Alexander Dennis Dart/East Lancs Myllennium B43F 51-4 (PN05 SYG/H/J/O) and the renumbering of Leyland Lynx 53 (K852 MTJ) to 64.

Happy Al's, Birkenhead

New is Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart DK05 FWB, with seatbelted high-backed Esteban seats and a fixed destination display (in vinyl) for service 140 (St Helens-Bold Heath). This work was gained following the demise of Norbus, Kirkby.

Two dual-door London-specification Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties have been acquired from Kenneally, Waterford. One is T192 KDM and both retain Waterford City Service fleetnames.

The future of former Merseybus Leyland Olympian E210 WBG is in doubt following extensive collision damage.

Hellyer, Fareham

An impressive new addition is KF05 HOF, a highly specified 13.75metre three-axle Volvo B12B/Jonckheere Mistral 70 C49Ft.

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

Acquisitions are Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 3500 F45 LCH from North West Travel, expected to be converted to C61F. Further acquisitions are similar G255 VPK from Rapson, Brora and FY02 LDC, a Mercedes Benz 614D/Autobus Classique from Hoban, Workington.

Of the four recently acquired ex-Travel Dundee Volvo Citybus/Alexander — G93/7, 100/1 PES — G93 PES passed to Courtesy, Manchester and G97 PES to WJP Coaches.

Holmeswood, Rufford, Lancs

Former Chambers, Bures Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen W124 JDX is in stock.

Hulley, Baslow

The new MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution, 16 (AE05 EUY), replaced Leyland Lynx 16 (F733 LRG), which is joining others in Ireland as a schoolbus. Just one Lynx remains here — 20 (F724 LRG).

A new Optare Solo has been ordered to replace Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 1 (N847 YHH).

Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 YMB 508W is here from Elite Services, Stockport.

Ipswich Buses

Two former Arriva London Leyland Olympian/ECW H42/26D acquired via Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer) for new school contracts are 36/7 (C58 CHM, D150 FYM).

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry, S Yorks

Ex-London Volvo Ailsa B55-10 MkIII/Alexander A101 CUL has now passed to the V1 Preservation Group, Harlow, Essex.

Above: Konectbus 500 (YJ05 PXA), the first of five Wright Pulsar Gemini-bodied VDL DB250s for the Thickthorn park-&-ride contract in Norwich. It is one of four in this pink livery. These are the first Pulsar Geminis for an operator other than Arriva London. DAVID C. SMITH

Jeffs, Towcester
Ex-Go North East Leyland Olympian/ECW H45/32F C649/60 LJR have been acquired via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Jones, Llanfaethlu
ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3s OBR 772T, APT 807/18W are slowly being cannibalised.

Keighley & District BL
The Eclipse driver training Dennis Dart here has been numbered 042.

TransBus Mini Pointer Dart 720 (YJ04 LYF) has passed to Burnley & Pendle. Volvo B10BLEs 521/2/6/7/45-7 (R521/2/6/7 TWR, T545-7 AUA) have passed to the Traction Group at Barnsley after a period of storage in Burnley; 521/2/6/7 are going to Strathtay, 545-7 to Barnsley & District.

Kent Coach Tours, Ashford
New is Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B33F GN05 DZU.

Kimes, Folkingham, Lincs
An acquisition is DAF SB220/Ikarus Citibus J114 NCP, expected to oust the last Leyland National 2 in the fleet. Also acquired is former London General Volvo Citybus/Northern Counties G103 NGN.

KMP, Llanberis
Open-top Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs ODV 203W from Plymouth has been acquired and repainted blue for Snowdon Sherpa service S1 (Llanberis-Pen Y Pass).

Konectbus, Dereham
The new VDL DB250PF/Wright Pulsar Gemini H41/24F are 500-4 (YJ05 PXA-E). 500-3 are in pink livery for the Thickthorn Park-&-Ride in Norwich while 504 looks smart in fleet livery. It appeared at the Album (Association of Local Bus Company Managers) conference in Grantham in May before entering service.

Director Julian Patterson kindly advises that the new B42F Optare Tempos will be 400-5 (MX05 EKW-Z, ELC/H/J), but delivery has been delayed; it is hoped they will all be in service by the end of June.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 310 (J310 BVO) has been advertised for sale, leaving five Deltas, 301/9 (J201, 309 BVO), 334/40/53 (K334 FAL, K640 FAU, K353 FAL).

Ladyline, Key Green, Cheshire
Recent acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider F178 FWY and Volvo B10M coach LIL 8971.

Lancashire United BL
Volvo B6LE/Alexander ALX200 B35F 212/5 (P347/1 JND) have gone to Yorkshire Traction.

Leeway Bus Company
Ex-Stagecoach East Midland ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A316 XWG has been repainted yellow for Mold-area schools work.

Liverpool Motor Services, Aintree
South Gloucestershire, Patchway has acquired six Leyland Olympians — ECW-bodied D706 YHK, Optare-bodied E156 OMD and Alexander-bodied E219 WBG, F249 YTJ and F306/9 JTY.

London Central/ London General GA
New are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B29F LDP263-72 (LX05 EYP/R-W/Y, EXZ, EYA).

AEC Routemasters sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, are RML2376, 2502/35, 2644/54, 2736 (JJD 376, 502/35D, NML 644/54E, SMK 736F).

London United TD
An order has been placed for 58 Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs, the biggest single order yet for this increasingly popular type.

Lyles, Batley, W Yorks
DAF SB220/Optare Delta YIW 4273 (*F849 YJX*) has been advertised for sale along with Van Hool GSU 340.

McEwen, Mansfield
The first double-deckers here are Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties H40/32F A751 NNA, formerly with Aston, Killamarsh, and Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H40/30F B82 PJA, ex-Stagecoach Manchester. Both are being refurbished to a high standard including wheel trims and marker.

Malbank Minibuses, Nantwich
New is Optare Solo SlimLine/B28F YJ54 UBD, in blue/yellow Nantwich Rider livery, replacing Renault/Omni OV02 YNF, now sold. Similar OV02 YNG is also to be replaced with a new Solo, the Renaults having suffered transmission problems.

Malcolm's Bus Service, Clacton
Apparently no vehicles are owned, rolling stock being hired in as required. Following on from Mulley's Volvo B10M/Duple F995 UME, Malcolm has more recently been noted using Talisman, Great Bromley's former First Essex Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver K640 GVX for his 555 (Clacton-Jaywick circular).

MASS, North Anston
Leyland Olympians 163/4/5 (ANA 2, 3, 6Y) are to be withdrawn as their MoTs expire. Their ANA-Y plates may be used on other vehicles. Leon Olympians B559 ATX and D43 RWC have also been noted at North Anston.

Former Leon Leyland Tigers 104/32 (LEO 163, FIL 4145) have gone to Tally Ho!, Kingsbridge, Devon and 133 (FIL 4146) has gone for scrap. 104 has reverted to its original VKY 541Y and its LEO 163 plate is on N157 BFC (*N1 MAS*). Tiger 127 (GDZ 885) has gone to Cookson, Welshpool.

Merseypride, Bootle
A further ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian acquired from Yorkshire Traction is A649 OCX. Having operated for nearly two years in its former operator's livery (UK North), former Crosville Leyland Olympian B183 BLJ is in fleet livery.

Metroline DG
New are Alexander Dennis Trident ALX400 H41/19D TA638-44 (LK05 GFO/V/W-Z, GCA/E). Their low downstairs seating capacity follows London Buses' banning of tip-up seats.

Routes H1, H2 and H3, for which Optare Solo SlimLines have been ordered, are Hampstead Garden Suburb and not Harrow area routes, presently worked by long (MRL) and short (OM) Optare MetroRiders and solitary Mercedes Benz 811D/Marshall MMS269 (N161 YEG). They are now among the last of their types running on London services.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts
MCW-bodied Leyland Atlantean VFT 199T has been withdrawn.

Mulley, Ixworth, Suffolk
A new coach is Scania K94/Irizar S-Kool YN05 HBO in plain white.

National Express NX
Two ex-dealer stock Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paragons, W208/13 EAG, which had been leased to Wallace Arnold, are in stock at Stansted.

Nefyn Coaches, Gwynedd
New is Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart B37F CX54 BDU. Acquisitions of late are Volvo B10M/Van Hool L767 SUB, Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah S416 AWP and Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 V252 LKM. Mercedes 709D/Reeve Burgess H741 TWB has been withdrawn.

Newport Transport
The last two Scania double-deckers, N113DRB/Alexander 48, 50 (G48, 50 FKG) have been withdrawn for sale. Also withdrawn, but for storage in the meantime, are N113CRB/Alexander Striders 4-8 (K104-8 KTX).

N113DRBs 47/9, 51/2 (G47 FKG etc) have been sold to Northern Blue, Burnley, which has 10 ex-Newport double-deckers — 22/4, 42-4/6/7/9 and 51/2.

NIBS, Wickford, Essex
Temporary routes 31D and 36D have been contracted by Essex-County Council to serve Danbury while the main A414 road is closed. White Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall S722 KNV is used on the 31D, plus other single-deckers, while Clintona has been working the 36D 'on hire to NIBS' with Mercedes 609D/Alexander M889 ECD.

Norbus, Kirkby
Another Dennis Dart SLF converted to bio-diesel was W363 ABD before the end of operations here.

Services 101 (Vauxhall circular) and 128 (St Helens-Parr) are now run by Huyton Travel; 140 (St Helens-Bold) by Happy Al's; 143 (Bootle-Walton Park), 154 (Fazakerley-Netherton), 159 (Bootle-Fazakerley Hospital), 194/195 (St Helens circulars), 230 (Maghull circular) by Glenvale Travel; 206 (Crosby-Hightown) by Northwest Travel and 210/250 (Liverpool-Maghull), 245/246/247 (Maghull circulars), 248 (Huyton-Prescot) by Arriva. Commercial services 197 (Kirkby Station-Southdene) and 217/290 (Kirkby Civic Centre-Huyton) have been withdrawn.

Norfolk County Services
New for Postwick Park-&-Ride are Irisbus Agora Line/Optare AO05 FKB-H in orange livery. Previous Agora Lines OY53 REU, RFE/F, RDU/V/X/Z are yellow, ex-green, having moved from the Sprowston Park-&-Ride (lost to First) to the Airport Park-&-Ride (won from Ambassador). A new base has been opened at Norwich Airport industrial estate to cater for this expansion.

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

SG Staus Bus & Coach Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Right: One of the latest Irisbus Agora Lines for Norfolk County Services' park-&-ride fleet, AU05 FKB, in its orange livery. In common with all Agora Lines for the UK, its French-built structure was glazed and fitted out by Optare in Leeds. DAVID C. SMITH

North Birmingham Busways, Erdington
Leyland Atlanteans 43, 72 (ANA 543Y, A702 LNC) are in reserve, while 18 (JFV 318S) has been sold to Trailways, Bloxwich, 69 (ANA 569Y) being towed away by Wigley, Carlton (dealer). The only Atlantean remaining from the opening fleet is 21 (URN 321V), having been in stock for 11 years and still used regularly on schools work.

Thanks go to operations director Dave Wall for news of his fleet.

Northern Blue, Burnley
More ex-Newport Scania N113DRB/Alexander RH-type double-deckers here are G47/9, 51/2 FKG.

North West Travel, Liverpool
Optare Solo W84 NDW has been acquired for use on service 206, formerly operated by Norbus.

Nottingham City Transport TD
The company's *Network News* reports that 30 more new vehicles are due for delivery, noting that average vehicle age is now less than five years. The next new Scania OmniDekka/East Lancs double-decker delivery, for Go2 services 44/45 (Gedling) and later 58 (Arnold) in the summer will bring the low-floor tally to 80% of the fleet.

New Scania OmniCity single-decker 500 (YN05 GWY) is in service. Further OmniDekkas include 675 (YN05 WGD) and YN05 WFB-F, for which we do not yet have fleetnumbers.

Optare Solo 237 (Y237 LRR) wears tram-style 'Link' livery (as does 234). 238 wears Fosseway Flyer scheme, 251/6 Network Pathfinder, 250/3 Southwell Sprinter and 262 Network (ex-Pathfinder). Volvo Olympian/East Lancs 470-6 (R470-6 RRA) have lost Brown Line branding.

No Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolynes are to go to Gotham, while 421 has been repainted white.

Scania L113/East Lance Flyte 640-2 (P640-2 ENN), which were given South Notts branding in error, have gone into Navy Line branding, as have Optare Solos 283-5 (S283-5 NRB). 234/5 (FP02 XMB/C), having lost Pathfinder branding, gained Navy branding, but 234 has since lost this.

Volvo Olympian/East Lancs 483/4 (L483/4 LNN) remained in daily service into April but are earmarked for sale to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), as are 488/9 (L488/9 NTO). Ensign has sold 485/6 (L485/6 NTO) to Western Greyhound. Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 762 (L829 HEF) has also been sold.

A special word of thanks go to my regular Nottingham correspondent Alan Spencer for a wealth of items, leaflets and publications kindly sent for Fleet News.

Ogden, St Helens
More acquisitions are ex-Tyrer, Nelson Mercedes-Benz 814D/Mellor R849 JGD and ex-Claribel, Birmingham Optare Excel L1150 V393 KVY. Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar R563/4 UOT are in service.

Owens, Rhiwlas
Ex-Arriva North West Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander P396 FEA and ex-Stagecoach 709D/Marshall M231 UTM are here.

Pat's Coaches, Wrexham
The first 12.9m Volvo B12B/Berkhof for a UK operator is C53Ft-bodied FJ05 AOE, in Travelscope livery.

Philips, Holywell
Optare Solo YJ05 JXW is in Flintshire Connexions livery for service 126 (Mold-Holywell).

Plymouth Citybus
Following an increasing trend towards the use of heavy-duty buses, this Dennis Dart operator has ordered eight Mercedes-Benz Citaros, its first 12m single-deckers, for use on a 'high-profile service' later this year.

Right: Not quite what it says on the tin. The operator of Alexander-bodied Scania N113DRB 151 (G51 FKG), photographed in Bacup, may indeed by Northern Blue, but its livery is the green and cream of Newport Transport, its former owner. JOHN YOUNG

Below right: Preston Bus 131 (E331 MSG), one of 10 Alexander RH-bodied Leyland Olympians bought from Lothian Buses, in the city's central bus station, which remains under threat of imminent demolition. LUKE GOTTARD

Preston Bus
Mercedes-Benz Citaro demonstrator BX05 UVZ entered service here on 6 May on service 11 (Preston Bus Station-Ribbleton), the next service due for low-floor conversion.

Seven of the ex-Lothian Leyland Olympians were back from rebuilding to single-door by 6 May. Restricted appearances have been made in normal service.

The long drawn-out saga of the new 14-vehicle orbital route appears resolved. Part of the route caused controversy with residents; vehicles will use Fulwood Row, which is to have rising bollards activated by buses; residents proposed Bluebell Way as an alternative.

East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean 165 (OFV 165X) is earmarked for early sale. Optare MetroRiders 1, 7 (M401/7 TCK) have been sold to an operator in Aylesbury. 3, 4, 6, 8 (M403/4/6/8 TCK) went to Jones, Pontypridd, 5 and 41 (M405 TCK, J697 CGK) to Town Lynx, St Helens, not Town & Around as previously reported for 5.

My thanks to regular Preston correspondent Jeff Watson for keeping us posted on developments.

Quick Travel, Pemberton
Former MTL and Glenvale Optare MetroRider N811 CKA is here for Ormskirk local service 76 won recently from Holmeswood.

Reading Transport
1013-20, the next Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F, will enter service on 4 July on Reading's next quality corridor, route 9 (Shinfield Park-Caversham).

Regal, Cooksmill Green, Essex
Optare Solo MX03 YDF has been acquired from Shetlands Islands Council and normally operates service 52 (Chelmsford-Pleshey).

Ringwood, Staveley, Derbyshire
A relatively unusual new midicoach here is Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Esker C28F YN05 RXW. Older Mercedes Y647 HWY has been sold.

Road Car YT
Volvo B6/Marshall 386 (L86 CNY) is back in service at Lincoln, and open-top MCW Metrobuses 742/3 (MBZ 7142, BLZ 1423 *POG 492/5Y*) are in service at Skegness.

The fate of accident-damaged Scania N113CRB/Plaxton Verde 274 (J273 UWO) has been decided. Although assessed for repairs, it is to be sold.

Ross, Featherstone, W Yorks
New are Optare Solo M950/B33F YJ05 WCP/R with Featherstone Rover fleetnames.

Shamrock, Pontypridd
Dennis Dart 8.5SDL/Reeve Burgess Pointer B28F H116 THE, acquired from Phoenix Student Travel, Witham, Essex, in 2003, has finally entered service at Barry, in a version of the new 'TB' Thomas of Barry livery. Thomas's Llandow base has been vacated in favour of the previous operating centre at Barry Docks.

Shearings/Wallace Arnold
Since the amalgamation with Wallace Arnold, some Shearings vehicles have appeared in allover white with Shearings-Wallace Arnold fleetnames, Van Hool-bodied Volvos 102/5 (T102/5 JBA) and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo 127 (T127 JBA) being early examples noted. Shearings-liveried coaches have been given supplementary windscreen visor fleetnames for Wallace Arnold, Wallace Arnold-liveried ones getting Shearings names pending adoption of a single livery for next year.

Wallace Arnold coaches allocated fleetnumbers are 352/9/89 (3333 WA, Y718 HWT, GT02 WAY), 458/63/73/87 (YC02 CFV, CHH, DFZ, DJF), 571/2/9/80/1 (YJ03 VNV, VOA/K/M/P) and 752 (GT04 BGT).

Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Mistrals 950-4 (R950-4 YNF) are withdrawn, while similar 123-8/30-2 (T199, 124-8/30-2 JBA) and Wallace Arnold B10M-62/Plaxton Paragon 7436/53 (Y736/53 HWT) have gone into the National Holidays fleet.

Sheffield Community Transport
Six Optare Aleros — understood to be YN04 LWX/Y, XZH/J-L — have been part-exchanged for six of the increasingly popular Optare Solo SlimLine. SlimLines noted are yellow/white YJ05 JXM/N, the former route-branded for Penistone.

Skills, Nottingham
Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver V401 SVV has been on loan from Dawsonrentals. Setras R614/6 AAU are with South West Coaches, Yeovil and Volvo/Van Hool YXI 5503 (*F739 ENE*) is with Cox, Belper, re-registered COX 637V.

Southcoast Motor Services, Croydon
Happily, Tim Baker tells me that Southcoast is again operating restored Southdown vehicles this summer. The principal service is 77 (Brighton-Devil's Dyke) on Sundays/bank holidays 24 April to 19 June, 4-25 September only, with open-top Leyland Titan PD3/4/ Northern Counties 'Queen Mary' 406 (406 DCD) in open-top form, and panoramic-windowed, roofed 350 (HCD 350E) as reserve.

Excursions and private charters feature, with day tours running from Haywards Heath, East Grinstead and Chichester. A special charter is to see 406 going to France via the Channel Tunnel on 2 July.

Restoration of another Queen Mary, 954 (954 CUF) is well under way, with the interior of the upper saloon nearing completion.

Above & right: As we reported last month, Road Car is experimenting with its livery, as demonstrated on these two Alexander-bodied double-deckers. Volvo Citybus 707 (F107 XCW), one of 12 acquired from Burnley & Pendle, has green lower panels upswept at the rear. Leyland Olympian 640 (D380 XRS), one of three ex-Stagecoach North West, has the green and yellow areas reversed.
RICHARD GODFREY

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire ST
Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 14509 (F509 NJE) is back in service after repairs and 14513 (F513 NJE) has new electronic destination equipment.

Peterborough's fleet of Optare MetroRiders has grown to six with the transfer of corporate-liveried 47979 (M959 VWY) from Cambridge; the others are 47976-8 in corporate livery and 47988/9 in green park-&-ride livery for the city centre shuttle operated in connection with the partial closure of Town Bridge.

Stagecoach East ST
In April, fleet strength stood at Bedford (122), Northampton (86), Kettering (53) and Corby (26). The two heritage fleet Bristol Lodekka FLF6Gs are active again this year.

The driver trainer fleet comprises Mercedes-Benz 609D 41983 (H838 GLD), L608D 41998 (D560 RCK) and Volvo B10Ms 52021/4/32/3/5/6 (L156/9 LBW, N46/3/5/2 MJO), 52108/9 (ACZ 7490/1).

Mercedes 709D 40338 (M338 DRP) was destroyed by fire, after being stolen. Awaiting disposal in April were 709Ds 40350/1/6/9/75 (K350/1/6/9 ANV, L375 JBD) and Volvo B10M coach 52454 (R554 JDF).

Stagecoach East Midlands ST
New Neoplan Skyliner double-decker coaches 50145/6/50 are allocated here for Megabus.com work and former East London ex-Hong Kong Leyland Olympian 13611/7 (OSK 784, H445 EGU) and similar 13646/52 (H463/2 EJR) from Manchester are also due here. 13611 has been unofficially named *Oskar* on account of its registration.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 42590 (T590 SKG) has moved to Grimsby-Cleethorpes from Mansfield. Mansfield-based Leyland Olympians 14319/24 (A319 XWG, A324 AKU) have been transferred to Hull, as have

Left: Early evidence of the Shearings-Wallace Arnold merger on two Volvo B12Ms from the constituent fleets. Van Hool Alizéée-bodied 708 (MX05 AGY) is in Shearings' latest livery with WA windscreen visor vinyls. Sunsundegui-bodied 462 (YC02 CHG) is in Wallace Arnold livery with Shearings vinyls.
DAVID JUKES/GEOFF MILLS

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES
AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
SG Staus Bus & Coach Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Grimsby-Cleethorpes Volvo Olympians 16088, 16105 (R188, 105 XWO), Chesterfield's 16151 (R151 HHK), 16453/5-7 (P153/1/6/7 KWJ) and Worksop's 16462 (S162 RET).

Volvo B10M driver trainer 52092 (H182 EGU) has received ancillary livery.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40803 (P353 NKH) is understood withdrawn. Leyland Tiger/Alexander P-types 25830/1 (B630/1 DWF) have been sold to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Stagecoach London ST

Dennis Tridents 17060/1 (T661/2 KPU) and DAF SB220/Optare Delta 26026 (J726 CYG) have moved to Stagecoach West while Megabus Leyland Olympians 13611/7/8 (OSK 784, H445 EGU, H522 FRP) have gone to Stagecoach East Midlands (13611/7) and West Scotland (13618).

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Ten Alexander Dennis Trident ALX400s, 18321-30 (MX05 WHN/P/R-W/Z, WJA), are due at Princess Road in July for service 250 (Piccadilly-Trafford Centre).

The three Neoplan Skyliners for Princess Road are 50147-9 (MX05 BWP/N/O), and not as shown in the latest *Stagecoach Bus Handbook*. Following revisions to the Megabus.com network, one will transfer permanently to Winchester from June.

Mercedes-Benz Varios 42540/2 (P540/2 PNE) have gone to Dumfries & Galloway Council for its schoolbus fleet, 42548 (P548 PNE) to GHA Coaches, Corwen.

Ex-Dennis's Dart/Plaxton 33083/94/5 (P979 LNB, R575 ABA, R103 BDB) have been repainted into corporate livery, and are starting to appear on service 11 (Stockport-Wythenshawe-Altrincham), allowing it to be upgraded to low-floor buses. East Lancs-bodied Darts from Dennis's have also been noted on the 11.

Stagecoach North West ST

More flood damaged buses sold to salvage dealer Lloyd, Hixon are Leyland Titan 10512 (KYV 512X), Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 20719 (K719 DAO) and Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde 27202 (L202 YAG). Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40081 (J878 GHH) has gone for scrap.

Above: Stagecoach Manchester 33099 (MX04 AXP), one of the TransBus Pointer Darts acquired with the business of Dennis's of Dukinfield, with its new owner's fleetnames applied over its former operator's livery. LUKE GOTTARD

Stagecoach South East ST

East Kent expects nine Optare Solos at Thanet shortly, while another Alexander Dennis Trident is expected for use on East Kent Triangle services.

Official garage codes have been revised. They are:

Southdown — Chichester (CR, ex-CH), Lewes (LS), Portsmouth including Taxibus (PM), Worthing and Henfield outstation (WG)

Hampshire Bus — Andover (AR, ex-AN), Basingstoke (BE, ex-BA), Winchester including outstations at Bishops Waltham, Petersfield and Alton (WI).

Hants & Surrey — Aldershot including outstations at Haslemere and Petersfield (AT, ex-AL).

Hastings & District — Hastings (HS).

East Kent — Ashford (AD, ex-AS), Dover (DO), Folkestone (FO), Herne Bay including outstation at Canterbury (HY, ex-CY) and Thanet (TH).

Below: Two of the Northern Counties-bodied Volvo B10Ms that Stagecoach South East has repainted in heritage liveries this year. Double-deck 15202 (F302 MYJ) wears the post-privatisation Southdown livery it carried when new while single-deck 20654 (R654 HCD) is in Maidstone & District dark green with traditional scrolls. DAVID JUKES/TERRY S. BLACKMAN

Stagecoach Wales ST

A further four CH65/26Ft Neoplan Skyliners for Megabus work are 50139/40/3/4 (CN05 FVU-X), bringing the tally to eight, although 50128 (SV54 ELJ) returned to Stagecoach Bluebird off loan in April.

Further vehicles acquired from other group fleets to replace those destroyed in the Pontypool depot fire are Volvo B10M/Plaxton C51F 52137 (K567 GSA), C53F 52141 (K571 DFS) from Stagecoach Western and similar but C47Ft 52267 (PSU 788, *M164 SCK*) from Bluebird and subsequently upseated to C49Ft. Not all the acquired coaches are necessarily to be allocated to Pontypool, as internal exchanges are being made so that the most suitable vehicles are based there.

The fire-damaged vehicles were removed by scrap dealers in April; they were Leyland Titans 10602/65 (NUW 602/65Y), Volvo B10M coaches 52016/9/25, 52221 (M135 SKY, TJI 4123, M321 KRY, M35 LHP), Leyland Tiger 59002 (TJI 4124) and Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer schoolbuses 59101/2 (M180/2 XHW).

From April, the former Anslow coaching unit has operated with the Red & White Coaches fleetname, which is being applied to all vehicles as they are repainted into a red and white version of standard Stagecoach livery. Volvo B10M/Plaxton 52153 (NIL 8646) is first to wear it.

Megabus Leyland Olympian 13624 (TSU 638, *H987 RKG, ES 3771*) has gone to Stagecoach Manchester — possibly only short term — and Volvo B10M/Plaxton 52195 (LJY 145, *L125 NAO*) went to Bluebird after a second short stint here.

Withdrawn some time ago, former Cardiff Optare MetroRider 206 (K187 YDW) has been sold for scrap.

Stagecoach West ST

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32130 (K130 SRH) has moved from Cheltenham & Gloucester to Cheltenham District. Moving in the opposite direction is Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 30723 (M73 HHB), thereby concentrating all remaining B6s at Gloucester. The three remaining Mercedes-Benz 711Ds are at Stroud.

Withdrawals have taken the last Mercedes 709D/Alexander out of service, Cheltenham & Gloucester 40725/35 (N725/35 RDD) and Swindon & District 40727 (N727 RDD). Also withdrawn is Cheltenham & Gloucester Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 30712 (L712 FWO).

A further DAF SB220/Optare Delta B40D added to the driver training fleet is ex-Stagecoach London 26026 (J726 CYG). Allocated to Stroud, it is in allover lime green with 'Learn to Drive' vinyls. Former Swindon & District driver trainer Leyland Lynx 29613 (G613 CEF) has been sold to UK Bus Dismantlers.

To mark the 24 April service changes at Gloucester, preserved Bristol REs KHW 309E (ex-Cheltenham District 1003) and THU 354G (ex-Bristol Omnibus 508) operated on the X94 all day on 23 April, replacing Volvo B10M Interurbans.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

This company has taken over former First Essex-Maldon town service 288 and service 93 (Maldon-Southminster).

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET: Barfordian Coaches

BASED: Goldmington Road, Bedford

FOUNDED: Fifty years ago in Great Barford by Harry Hull as a taxi business after he was demobbed. George and Jan Williams bought it later, developed the coaching side and sold it to the Bullard family in 1986, by which time it had nine coaches. Peter Bullard, who already ran a haulage firm based at Thurleigh, is managing director and seven other family members are involved directly. In 2000, the business moved to its current premises, previously used by Ouse Valley Coaches, and built stylish new offices there.

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?: UK and European private hires (the latter mainly for youth groups), its own UK and Continental tour programme and long-haul flight packages to the likes of North America and New Zealand. Also operates 17 Bedfordshire County Council school contracts, two works contracts and Bedford Borough Council evening service 159 to Cranfield.

LIVERY: Orange with yellow and blue, although five of the latest coaches have a slightly lighter pearlescent finish.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?: Operator licence is for 24, although 23 are currently operated. Twelve are Bova Futuras, four are double-deck schoolbuses.

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?: The schoolbus fleet includes a 63-seat Duple Dominant bus-bodied Bedford YNT new to Chambers, Bures. Pride of place goes to a newly delivered 67-seat 15m Bova Futura — the UK's first 15m coach. Two other Futuras are comparatively rare 10m examples.

A cross-section of the Barfordian coach fleet, with a Neoplan Skyliner double-decker, the new 15m Bova Futura and one of the 10m examples. ANDY IZATT

Two buses noted at Excel's base showing discs for the Stansted Bus Company are ex-NIBS, Wickford Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW NDL 652R and ex-McKindless, Wishaw Leyland Olympian/East Lancs C286 BBP.

Following the loss of local authority grant and the cessation of open-top service 67, The Southend Tour, a special last appearance by open-top bus was arranged for Sunday 5 June, when ex-Ribble Leyland Olympian/ECW open-topper JFR 4W was due to make two round trips of the old 68 service (diverted via Southchurch Park for the Southend Bus Rally) between Highlands, Thames Drive and Shoeburyness, East Beach. Open-top buses first ran in Southend in 1921 and this is the first summer since 1946 that there has been no service.

Stott, Oldham

Recent acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2s from Zak's, Birmingham — B29F S579 XOM and B31F T293 ROF, both usually working Huddersfield-Colne Valley Circular services 390/391/396/397.

Stringer, Pontefract

Optare Solo M920/B33F VU02 TTK is another acquisition from Brylaine, Boston.

SunFun, Earith, Cambs

Former Travel West Midlands Leyland Lynx G109 EOG is a recent acquisition, still in Dunn-Line livery.

Supertravel, Speke

Rare Marshall Minibus R112 VLX remains in service.

Sureline, Weymouth

A rarity understood to be still at work here is former United Auto Mercedes-Benz L608D C407 VVN, one of only two minibuses converted to open top.

Talisman, Great Bromley, Essex

Ex-Crusader, Clacton Toyota Coaster/Caetano Optimo M232 JBC is here as are Scania K113/Van Hool WIL 3635/6 and Kässbohrer Setra S215 SSU 331. Withdrawn is Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton K634 GVX.

TM Travel, Staveley, Derbyshire

Recent acquisitions are DAF SB230/Van Hool C49Ft J852 KHD from Sweyne, Swinefleet and Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H43/30F E915 KYR from Stagecoach East Midland, while white Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere N963 DWJ has been noted with TM fleetnames. The Olympian was among those ordered by GM Buses, delivered to London Buses for Bexleybus operations and later sold to Busways.

Former Burnley & Pendle Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F R669 LFV is in use here as is Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart/B41F S779 RNE from Mistral Bus & Coach (dealer), which may have been acquired. Meanwhile, Varios T431/3 EBD remain on hire from Dawsonrentals.

Mercedes-Benz Varios YN54 WWU/V are used primarily on former D&G services in the Ashbourne area, one being outstationed each night with Ennis Coaches, Wirksworth. Vario YN53 EJX acts as a spare, with Optare Solo YN53 TTW also having made odd appearances.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur R918 HTW has been re-registered R7 TMT, Scania K113CRB R7 TMT being re-registered R127 WNT and sold. Volvo B10M K44 TMT has passed to Snowdon, Easington, Co Durham.

Mercedes-Benz Vario R277/83 RAU are in latest livery of cream with wavy red skirt, having entered service in Konectbus dark blue, yellow and grey. Scania L113 N632 XBU has been repainted in all-red bus.

It is 10 years since Tim Watts founded this business, now Derbyshire's largest independent with over 70 vehicles including 20 double-deckers for schools work.

Tower Coaches, Wigton, Cumbria

This operation was sold late last year. The new owner occupies the former Cumberland Motor Services garage at Burnfoot and has taken on Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Paramount C53F JIL 3810 (*XRR 501Y*), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B25F K624 UFR, Mercedes 609D/Reeve Burgess B21F D232 VRM from Cumbria Council and a Renault Trafic.

After 15 years' service, Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Supreme HIL 8027 (*SDD 146R*) has been sold for preservation in the Gloucester area, its owner hoping to restore it to National Travel South West livery.

Thanks go to former proprietor Gerald Walker for these notes.

Town Lynx, St Helens

This company has been reformed from Lancashire Rose (Pugh). A recent acquisition is Optare MetroRider 3 (M405 XCK) from Preston Bus and repainted orange, joining similar 2 (M216 TNU) from Nottingham City Transport.

Travel West Midlands NX

Withdrawn are Leyland Lynx 1311 (G311 EOG) and MCW Metrobuses 2574, 2648, 2877/96, 2906 and 3085 (POG 574Y, ROX 648Y, B877 DOM, C896, 906 FON) while 2603/42, 2743/99, 2896 and 2969 (POG 603Y, ROX 642Y, A743 WVP, B799 AOP, C896 FON, A109 WVP) have been sold.

Correspondents in the West Midlands area are particularly invited to send accurate material to Fleet News, reports having dropped to an all-time low.

The Travellers Choice, Carnforth

Seven new Volvo coaches have been delivered, including four B12Ms with ZF six-speed automatic transmission, the first of their kind in the country. The other three are B7Rs, of which one, PN05 BHL, has a Plaxton Profile C70F body for schools work; the other six all have Sunsundegui Sideral bodywork, C49Ft on the B12Ms and C53F on the B7Rs.

Trent Barton WG

Scania L94UB/Wright Solar Urban B44F 665-7 (FN54 BRX-Z) are in standard red livery. Optare Excels 220/1 have lost route branding for the Rushcliffe Lines and are in red and pink, rebranded for the Mickleover routes. Dennis Dart 899 is brown for use the Borrowash Flyer service, based at Derby.

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

SG Staus Bus & Coach Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Warrington Borough Transport
Leyland Olympian/ECW 72 (PFM 129Y) is back in on schools work.

Weavaway, Newbury
Further to last month's report, the impressive new tri-axle Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Myllennium Nordic DPH63/39F are OU05 AVB/D/Y, AWJ, KKB, KLA. The lower saloon includes a table, and two rows of seats can be removed for a wheelchair to be accommodated, standing being limited to three. Another two are expected in August.

Western Greyhound, Newquay
Ex-Nottingham City Transport Volvo Olympian/East Lancs H49/35F L485/6 NTO have been acquired via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

West London Buses
The actions of some enthusiasts led to fictitious operators being reported within these columns, so this time, can I say ahead that West London Buses is a fictitious operator.

Be assured, your columnist hasn't gone barmy — this 'operator', with Leyland National Greenway TIB 4873 (*MCA 671T*) in a red, grey and white livery, has been created specifically for the filming of a new series of the famous *On the Buses*.

Whippet, Fenstanton
Another Volvo B6BLE/East Lancs Spryte here is W992 BDP, new to Chiltern Queens, Woodcote.

April saw the loss of Cambridgeshire County Council contracted services 400-409 to Huntingdon & District, which Whippet operated since 1988. They entailed only one vehicle and driver per day.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 3500 F694 PAY has been withdrawn. The withdrawal of the last DAF coach, A807 REW, not only saw the end of this marque, but also that of Duple coachwork — a tradition that began here in 1938 with the arrival of Bedford WLB EW 7227. The oldest vehicle left is Volvo B10M GIL 2968 (*B169 WKO*).

Wilfreda-Beehive, Adwick-le-Street
There are at least five Scania/Irizar S-Kool C70F coaches in this fleet, YN54 OAO/P/U-W being confirmed.

The Optare Solo M850/B29F are YJ54 UBP/R/T/U and SlimLine M7870s YN54 UBV/W are noted as B23F rather than B24F reported earlier.

BMC 1100FE school buses YN54 VVP/R, XBM/O are confirmed as B60F.

Williams, Deiniolen
ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 CWU 324T is here ex-Griffiths, Y Felinheli.

Wilts & Dorset GA
New for the Britford Park-&-Ride in Salisbury are more (with a small 'm') Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B40F 135-8 (HF05 HXD/E/G/H).

Go-Ahead ownership is beginning to make its mark, with plans to use fewer minibuses than before. New vehicles this year are set to oust most Leyland Olympians and Optare MetroRiders. Next year's will culling the cheap and reliable Bristol VRT/SL3, which are losing their appeal with passengers.

Summer open-top operation restarted on 30 May, with seven DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatines on the 150 group of services and two of the new Volvo B7TL/East Lancs convertibles open-topped for the first time, for the Bournemouth-Lymington corridor.

DAF SB3000/Van Hool coaches 3219-21 (M577/8/80 RCP) have been transferred to Damory, and Damory Leyland Tiger 5010 (XXI 8502 *B126 PEL*), Bova Futuras 5028-30 (L211-3 CRU), Volvo B10M 5034 (E313 OMG), Leyland Lynxes 5056/7 (E297/8 OMG) and LDV Pilot 5168 (P319 DOP) have gone into reserve, along with main fleet Leyland Tigers 3210/78 (XIB 3910, SIB 4903 *B210 REL*, *B278 KPF*).

Wirral Community Transport
MCV-bodied MANs AE54 JPX/Y are new.

Wootten, Chesham
Coaches acquired recently are former Shearings Volvo B10M/Van Hool Alizée C53F P822 GBA and B10M/Plaxton Premiere 350 C49Ft R186 TKU from Gordon, Rotherham, R551 TKV (*A20 CLC*) from Country Lion, Northampton and P288 ENT from Taf Valley, Penrheol.

Withdrawn are Volvo B10M/Jonckheere SJI 8101 (*B39 KAL*) and the last Leyland Tigers, Plaxton Paramount-bodied BFP 261Y and former Barrow Duple Laser-bodied UIB 4752 (*C913 XEO*).

Ex-Oxford Bus Company Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/Alexander E227 CFC is back in use following refurbishment.

Yorkshire Terrier YT
MCW Metrobus POG 481Y has been sold, after donating its roof to repair similar 1740 last year.

Yorkshire Traction YT
First of several new coaches due for National Express work are Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C49Ft 76/7 (YN05 XBC/D). The new BMC 1100FE schoolbuses are 101-4 (YN05 WDX-Z, WEA). Teething troubles have seen Dennis Darts and other vehicles used in their place.

Acquisitions from Lancashire United are Volvo B6LE/Alexander ALX200 B35F 161/2 (P341/7 JND), which are in the yellow/blue livery of the Scania OmniDekka double-deckers. Former London Central Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine H47/27F 612/3/20 (P903/5 RYO, R923 JMV) are in service at Huddersfield.

MAN 18.220/Ikarus demonstrator YN54 CNE departed in April, but was back for attention in early May.

Newly commissioned Leyland National 2 driver trainer T5 (OHL 251X) has been noted in use at Shafton, although earmarked for Doncaster. Similar 257 (OHL 257X) has been sold out of preservation for export to Africa.

By mid-April, Leyland Olympian 634 (A634 WDT) was being cannibalised at Barnsley and 643/6/59/67/71 (A643 WDT, A646 OCX, B659/67 EWE, C671 GET) were out of service, 646/67 with fleetnames removed and 659 (B659 CET); 654 (A654 OCX) is one of two to go to Alpine, Llandudno as open-toppers.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport
The new East Lancs-bodied double-deckers arrived in May. The Alexander Dennis Trident/Myllennium Lolynes are 17/8 (HMN 220/1A) and the VDL DB250/Myllennium Lowlanders are 44-6 (HMN 288-90A).

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY

Island Coachways
Two new Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah coaches are due.

The last two Optare MetroRiders, 72 and 87 (12727, 62067), have been towed to St Peter Port harbour for export.

Grand Bouet garage, built in the 1950s for Guernsey Railways, has had a further stay of execution until July, planning permission having been granted for flats. It was built for double-deckers, which didn't operate on the island until 30 years later. The new base will be at Victoria Avenue, a quarter of a mile away.

Universal Limos
The island press carried news of late-night buses starting on Good Friday showing a picture of AEC Routemaster RML2566 (JJD 566D). The idea is to provide a service when taxis are unable to meet demand, which has been seen as leading to rowdiness.

The Environment Department granted a licence for services on Friday, Saturday, Monday and Wednesday evenings between 20.00 and 02.00 with a flat fare of £1 up to 21.00 and £2 thereafter.

JERSEY
Yet another transport icon is set to go, the Weighbridge. Planning permission has been granted for redevelopment of the area.

Below: Yorkshire Traction 162 (P347 JND), an Alexander ALX200-bodied Volvo B6LE new to Stagecoach Manchester and one of a pair acquired from Blazefield's Lancashire United fleet, in service in Doncaster. These are the first Tracky single-deckers in yellow/blue. ALAN MILLAR

Right: Yorkshire Traction has revived a traditional-style red livery for the Northern Counties Palatine-bodied Volvo Olympians it has acquired ex-Go-Ahead London, including 608 (N418 JBV) photographed in Barnsley. DALE TRINGHAM

Connex Transport (Jersey)

MyBus Connexion, an experimental demand responsive service began on 28 May with 16-seat Mercedes-Benz minibuses J 89135, (*KF02 XSO*) serving the western parishes of St Ouen, St Peter and St Brelades, using the name of. A 90p flat fare is charged, with no concessions.

A new fleet-wide logo is in evidence with bus side windows promoting 'out of the blue', apparently to emphasise Jersey's relationship with the sea.

The current fleet comprises 33 short Dennis Dart/Caetanos new in 2002 (201-33), five 9.9m Dart/Caetanos new in 2004 (438-42) and the acquired Plaxton-bodied Darts (247, 334-7 and 443).

Easylink

This year's operations were due run between mid-April and October 2005. Link 55, 66 serves the west — St Aubins, St Brelades, Corbiere, St Ouen, Greve de Lecq and Living Legend, Link 77 serves the east — Samares Manor, Jersey Pottery, Gorey, Jersey Zoo and Las Hougue Bie, and Link 88 serves the Glass Church, Jersey War Tunnels, Living Legend, Jersey Gold and Jersey Zoo. Hotel early pick-up services 41 to 44 cover various parts. The present fleet comprises Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts 201-12/4-27.

Tantivy Blue Coach Tours

This fleet operates what must surely be the largest concentration of Leyland Swifts in the British Isles, with 33 still mustered for 2005, 19 with Wadham Stringer bodies (9, 10, 14-19, 22-27, 54, 62-65), six with Elme Orion (4-8, 11) and one Elme Galaxy (12), along with Waverley Tours having five Wadham Stringer-bodied examples (its 1-5). Ex-UK Swift 52 (J 14656, *E963 NMK*) has been sold.

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Particular thanks are due, this month, to the following for your most welcome contributions to Fleet News:

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HALFCABSETCETERA JOHN G.LIDSTONE's quarterly update on older British buses at home and abroad

Bristol

Former United Counties **KSW5G** 876 (SHK 519) new to Eastern National's Midlands Area and transferred in 1952 when almost new, appeared on eBay recently, an amazing first sighting of it for 35 years since United Counties sold it to dealer Twell, Ingham. It worked at Luton, Biggleswade and Bedford. What a marvellous ex-pat return that would make.

The Cambridge Omnibus Society notes that local independent Denyer's still has (in various stages of dereliction), a mouth-watering selection of long-forgotten vehicles. These include Hants & Dorset **K6A** 1160 (HLJ 17), Crosville **KSW6B** DKB639 (RFM 384), Bristol Omnibus Company **K6A** KHU 620, United Counties **KSW6B** 860 (CNH 699), Eastern Counties **L-type** GPW 679 and **MW6G** LS809 (3809 PW) Westcliff-on-Sea **LS6G** coach EJN 638.

Former West Yorkshire Road Car **VRT/SL3** PWY 38W is with Olivier Caeymaex of Visibus at Rho de Genese, south of Brussels, for publicity use, converted to a high standard and in white and light blue livery. It's for sale at Braine L'Alleud, Belgium. **VRT/SL2** JWW 227N is with the West Yorkshire RCC Preservation Group at Escrick.

Former Crosville **VRT/SL3/6LXB** YMB 500W and former PMT **VRT/SL3/501** MEF 823W are allover yellow as 'birthday buses' with Crazy Kidz, Cheadle.

Daimler

Former Leeds **Roe-bodied CVG6LX/30** 512 (7512 UA) is still with the Lille Transport Museum in France, re-registered 3671-LA-59.

Leicester Leylands

Titan PD3A/12 26 (LJF 26F) has been located in Prague, at the end of tram route 3. **PD3/1** 202 (XRY 202), rebuilt with open-staircase and what is described as a Tilling Stevens radiator — while retaining its illuminated offside advertisement panel — was for sale in Belgium in April. **PD3A/1** 55 (GRY 55D) — which retains normal guise — is for sale in France. Country Hopper, Ibstock has **Atlantean** 98 (PBC 98G) for preservation, rejoining **PD3/1** 90 (90 HBC). **Leopard/Plaxton Supreme** 3 (JUX 170V, *KJF 3V*) was for sale on eBay on the Internet.

Left: A candidate for the southernmost double-decker in the world is former Ribble 2177 (C177 ECK), an ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian, which has become a Salvation Army campaign bus on the South Island of New Zealand. It now carries appropriate registration 1 HOPE. DON ROBERTS

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

SG Staus Bus & Coach Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to: **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **20 July** for the **September** issue.

AAA Coaches, Kirknewton

Marcopolo Viaggio 330 C70F-bodied MAN 18.310s PF04 SYJ and PN05 BJY were new in June 2004 and April this year, respectively.

Plaxton C70F-bodied Dennis Javelin W607 XRV was sold to Base (dealer), Holmeswood in April.

Allander, Milngavie

Jonckheere Millennium Mistral 50 C51Ft-bodied Volvo B12Ms AT83/4 (SF05 KWB/A) were new in March and further additions in April comprised Berkhof C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 AT85 (R319 NRU, *KNP 1X, R319 NRU*) ex-Stephenson, Tholthorpe; C53F-seated Bova Futura FLD12-270 AT86 (L982 OGY) ex-Hellyer, Fareham; and Futura Club FLC12-280 AT87 (M272 SBT) ex-Reading Transport 272.

Vehicles re-registered in April comprised Bova Futura FHD12-340 AT32 (4670 AT) to T260 EGD; similar FHD12-370 AT40 (7921 AT, *W128 BGB*) to W128 BGB; and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12Ms AT77/8 (SF04 SXX/Y) to 7921, 4670 AT respectively.

AT32 and AT40 were then sold to Dawlish Coaches, Torquay, while Plaxton Paramount 3200-bodied Volvo B10M-61 AT54 (GLZ 1270, *E607 KSP, JD 3164, 248 D 334*) passed to Stephenson, Tholthorpe at that time.

A & P Coaches, Glasgow

Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L125 DRN was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow by May.

Arthur, Coatbridge

ECW H45/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs SHE 622Y and C672 GET joined the DA Coaches fleet in April, ex-Yorkshire Traction 622/72.

Austin, Earlston

Unvi Esker C37F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L SN54 GWV and Unvi C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 1018 SN54 FNE were new last October.

Sitcar Beluga-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D Y648 HWY (*USU 643, Y648 HWY*) passed to Shaw & Duffelen, Maxey in February. Hispano-bodied Mercedes-Benz O404s NKH 819 (*Y741 DDA*) and UGE 471 (*Y365 UOM*) were given back their original registrations before being sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in April.

Blue Bus, Shotts

M16-bodied Ford Transit GN04 WWF was acquired new last year.

Bowman, Craignure

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61 OJI 5506 (*D468 EKS, GJI 627, D812 OSJ, GIL 1685, D566 MVR*) was acquired by Browning, Whitburn in March.

Brown, Edinburgh

Sitcar Beluga C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SN05 FHP was new in March. Four new Volvo B12M coaches are also due to be delivered — three with Berkhof Axial and one with Van Hool Alizée T9 coachwork.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 Y373 BFS was sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough in April 2004 and Irizar-bodied Scania K114EBs SK02 OZJ/L/M followed in March this year.

Browning, Whitburn

Van Hool Alizée C57F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 OJI 5506 (*D468 EKS, GJI 627, D812 OSJ, GIL 1685, D566 MVR*) joined this fleet in March, having been last used by Bowman, Craignure.

Christie, Alloa

March additions to this fleet comprised Jonckheere C51Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 XIL 6561 (*UCE 836, G145 MNH*) ex-Clarkson, Barrow; Beulas C48Ft-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391E 12.35 P625 SNO (*LSU 113*) ex-Townend, Shanklin; and Neoplan Transliner C49Ft-bodied Dennis Javelin S894 EJE (*S555 AMH*) ex-Owen, Oswestry. B22 TVU, a second Northern Counties H43/32F-bodied Dennis Dominator, had arrived by April ex-Stagecoach Manchester 15022. It entered service still largely in the old Stagecoach stripes livery.

Clyde Coast, Ardrossan

Van Hool Alizée T9 C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 GNZ 9360 (*R784 WSB*) was acquired in May; it was previously owned by Highland Heritage, Dalmally but its disposal to Brogan, Ballymoney reported last month may or may not have taken place although its current registration suggests that it did reach Northern Ireland. It entered service with this operator, still in gold Highland Heritage livery.

Coakley, Motherwell

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711Ds L865/7 LFS passed to Silcox, Pembroke Dock last October and Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario S279 LGA was acquired by Doyle, Ripley in March.

The depot in Alexander Street, Wishaw is being prepared for use again, having previously been used to store withdrawn vehicles before it was closed owing to problems with vandalism.

Monklands services 13 (Coatbridge town centre-Bargeddie), 15 (Kirkwood-Townhead, 115/116 (Coatbridge town centre-Kirkwood) and 177 (Coatbridge-Townhead) were all due to be cancelled from 8 July. These comprised the former Val-ew Tours route and all of those started recently in response to competition from Stepend, Glenmavis.

Cosgrove, Dundee

Hispano Vita C49Ft-bodied Mercedes-Benz O404 X4 HOF was acquired in April ex-Hellyer, Fareham.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61 KXA 394 (*8874 EL, A843 UGB*) passed to Davies, Llanelli in March and similar B10M-62 B9 SBP (*L10 BUS*) was sold to EvoBus (dealer), Coventry in April.

Davies, Plean

A recent addition to this fleet is Northern Counties H43/40F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R B125 TVU, previously Stagecoach Manchester 13125.

Dickson, Glenrothes

In addition to former Clackmannanshire Council TBP B16FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M609 NOG and former Renfrewshire Council Keillor B24FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D N457 ESL, this new operator has Plaxton-bodied Bedford YNT D840 KES, which was owned originally by Mayne, Buckie.

Dickson, Paisley

Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L748 LWA joined this fleet in April, having previously been used by Henderson, Hamilton.

DJ International, Barrhead

Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B10M-62s VJI 9410/3 (*HSK 649/6, T718/5 UOS*) were acquired from Rowe, Muirkirk in April and May respectively, but it is expected that their registrations will be returned to that firm.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 RIL 2576 (*L746 YGE, 1 PSV, L942 LBV*) was sold to Rowe at that time.

Docherty, Irvine

Unvi Esker C30F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L SN05 DMV was new in May. Van Hool Alizée T9 C49Ft-bodied Scania K124IB4 Y111 GSM also joined the fleet in May ex-Mayne, Buckie and was immediately re-registered EDO 837.

Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D N814 WSB was sold to Ferguson (dealer), Whitburn in May.

Dodds, Ayr

BB05 DOT is one of a pair of new Volvo B12Bs with Jonckheere Millennium Mistral 50 C51Ft coachwork.

Donaldson, St Andrews

SN05 HSY is another Unvi Esker C39F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L, which was new in April.

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R GX02 AHN passed to Plant, Cheadle in March.

Dunn, Airdrie

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N576 ACP (*7243 WA, N204 HWX*) was re-registered K1 WGD in April.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied DAF MB200 XAM 826A (*OTC 117Y, XAM 826A, OTC 117Y*) was acquired last December ex-Lowe, Cuminestown.

Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K124IB4 W412 SSX (*YSU 196, W412 SSX, 00 KK 2348*) was re-registered PSU 612 last December. Vehicles re-registered more recently were Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YSU 196 (*98 D 34353*) to R671 PSH in March and Indcar-bodied MAN 10.220 02 KK 2088 to PSU 610 in April.

Edinburgh Tours LB

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 356 was converted from H51/30D to single-door, partial open-top layout in January. Roe O43/29F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R 44 (A156 FPG) has gone to Scotguide, Glasgow.

Right: Edinburgh Tours, the sightseeing bus division of Lothian Buses, 357 (F357 WSC), a partial open-top Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian in Majestic Tour livery. PHIL HALEWOOD

SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD

New bus station for East Kilbride

Scottish Executive minister Andy Kerr officially opened a new £6 million state-of-the-art bus station and travel centre for East Kilbride on 3 June.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport and Land Securities, owner of the town's Olympia & Princes Mall shopping centre, worked in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council during the past three years to create a state-of-the-art new station on an expanded site around the location of the previous terminal. It had been in need of investment to overcome certain inherent problems, and could no longer cater for the number of bus departures required from it.

Land Securities has invested £2.9 million in the project and SPT provided £1.3 million. South Lanarkshire made available land that it owned adjacent to the development, and used approximately £2 million of its urban realm funds to upgrade the immediate environs. Redevelopment of the site began in February last year and the project has been completed on time.

It is anticipated that the new facility will be used by 400,000 bus and coach departures per annum. It has 14 stands, compared to eight in the previous station, to accommodate tour departures progressively from July, together with SPT's Dial-a-Bus and Ring'n'Ride services. At the request of operators, two stands have been designed to accommodate articulated vehicles. Electronic passenger information systems have been installed at central points and at each bus stand, with audio information also available at the latter.

Safety and security measures include enhanced closed-circuit television, which will be monitored both from the adjacent shopping centre and SPT's Buchanan bus station in Glasgow; improved lighting throughout; and a centralised evening departures area with help point, which will be used by all services after 20.00.

Considerable care has also been taken to look after elderly and disabled people, with features including way-finding slabs to assist the visually impaired; the React audio system, which provides audio directions in response to a fob available from local disability units, Shopmobility and SPT; and drop counters and induction loops in the travel centre, which also offers improved waiting areas for passenger comfort and safety.

Essbee, Coatbridge

Essbee M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi SF05 KWR was new in April. Similar 6 (SF03 ASU) was acquired by Bowden, Truro last October and Essbee-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 17 (SJ03 APZ) passed to Hunter, Moortown in March.

EVE Coaches, Dunbar

Alexander H47/33F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 F103 TML had joined this fleet by the end of 2003, having previously been owned by East Lothian Council. Other recent additions are Van Hool Alizée C44Ft-bodied Scania K124IB4s S26/7 DTS, which were acquired in February ex-Dunn-Line, Nottingham while OO05 EVE is a Scania K94IB4 with Irizar Intercentury C70F coachwork, which was new in March.

Optare Solo M850 V5 EVE was re-registered V844 FSG before being sold to Travelsure, Burnley last October and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 EUE 512 (*K514 KWT, 8980 WA, K806 HUM*) reverted to K514 KWT last December. New arrival S26 DTS was re-registered S400 EVE in February, when Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Citybuses G107/9 NGN were re-registered EUE 512 and GSU 370 respectively. Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K124IB4 Y604 JSH (*B18 DWA*) became Y10 EVE in March.

Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Citybus G108 NGN had left the fleet by the end of last year.

First Aberdeen FG

The first of the 20 new Wright Eclipse Fusion-bodied Volvo B7LA articulated buses entered service in May on Red Line services 1/2 (Danestone/Scotstown-Garthdee/Auchinyell), as 10154-7/60 (SV05 DXA/C-E/H). When they have all been delivered, it is anticipated that some of these buses will also be used on services 15 (Dubford-Kingswells) and Orange Line 16 (Springhill-Cove).

56501 (YX05 AVV) is a Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D with Optare coachwork, which was new in April.

Another recent acquisition, but only for spares, is Northern Counties H43/30F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 31173 (B44 PJA), latterly with First Glasgow.

First Edinburgh FG

36009/12 (SN05 HWY, HXB) are further new East Lancs H47/33F-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekkas. They were allocated to Livingston depot in April.

Duple C55F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ 22012 (F612 RBX) and similar Plaxton C51Ft-bodied TRCL10/3ARZM 22014 (F614 RBX, *5210 DD, F614 RBX*) were acquired from First Cymru as driver trainers last December.

Further Volvo Citybus B10M-50s transferred to this fleet by May from First Northampton include East Lancs DPH45/31F-bodied 38021 (D101 XNV) and Alexander DPH47/35F-bodied 38086/91/6 (F86 DVV, H291 VRP, J296 GNV). 38021/86/91 were allocated initially to Galashiels depot, and 38096 to Dalkeith.

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 62376 (A16 SMT, *N321 NHY*) reverted to its original registration by April.

Wright Endurance-bodied Scania N113CRL 62339 (N572 VMS) was transferred to First Potteries in April.

Former King, Dunblane Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCL10/3ARZA 163 (HSU 247, *F716 SML*) had been sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall by last October. Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus DR132/6 31581 (B103 PKS), Alexander-bodied Leyland-DAB Lion 31697 (C183 VSF), Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 31757 (NTC 137Y), Optare MetroRider MR17 50443 (M284 SMS), Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 50446 (J310 XLS), Duple-bodied Volvo B10M-61 62269 (E406 RWR, *KCB 758, HSU 955, E406 RWR*) and Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 62379 (N474 KHU, *A20 SMT, N474 KHU*) all left the fleet around March.

First Glasgow FG

Wright Fusion AB55D-bodied Volvo B10LAs 10044/5 (V601/2 GGB) had been re-acquired from First Manchester by May. New as AV1, 2 in 1999, they are back in service from Parkhead depot.

Alexander Dash B40F-bodied Volvo B6-50 48004 (L104 PWR) was transferred heret from First Leicester in May and has been allocated to Motherwell depot.

Further to previous reports, recently delivered Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 42877-88 are B37F and Dennis Dart SLF 41208 (R208 TLM) was latterly with First Manchester.

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 31173 [LO133] (B44 PJA) was transferred to First Aberdeen in March as a source of spares. Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsas 31199, 31211, 31357/8/63/5, 31463/5/7 [A90, 106, 52/5, 67, 70, 85, 92/4] (OGG 184Y, A732 PSU, KGG 112/5/27/30Y, OGG 181/8/90Y); Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobuses 31227/36/9/59/60/3 [DM160/44/9, CM274/5/81] (B580 MLS, BLS 431/44Y, D674/5/81 MHS); ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian coach 31246 [LO102] (C448 BKM); Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 31247/53 [CO211, LO1] (C801/7 KHS); and Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 50470/3 [MA249/52] (K806/11 DJN) had all left the fleet by April.

Fraser, Munlochy

Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 RJI 8720 (*972 FGD, 383 DVF, STT 614X*) was acquired last December ex-Lowe, Cuminestown.

Gibson, Moffat

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 OIL 2939 (*M804 HGB*) was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in March.

Gibson, Renfrew

Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF05 FMV was new in May, in the 'coach' livery of white with green and blue Gibson Direct fleetnames.

TransBus Mini Pointer Dart SF04 ZXC has recently been given the current fleet livery of dark blue front and rear with white sides, ex-allover white.

Glasgow Citybus

Further to last month's issue, recently acquired Dennis Dart SLF R551 UOT has UVG UrbanStar B42F bodywork, and Dennis Dart 8.5SDL H114 MOB has Carlyle Dartline B28F bodywork. Both vehicles entered service in the livery of their previous owners.

Gulliver's Travels, Langbank

Wadham Stringer Wessex II B21D-bodied Iveco Daily 59.12 M193 HTT was acquired in February last year ex-Stagecoach Devon 46328.

Harlequin, Dunblane

Caetano Algarve-bodied Volvo B10M-60 G903 WAY (*A6 WLS, G903 WAY*) had left the fleet by February.

Harris, Tarbert

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin H37 (T14 HCT) passed to Prentice, Haddington in March and Leicester Carriage Builders-bodied Iveco Daily 45.10 H36 (N438 MCN) had also been sold by May.

Following the loss of contracts last year and subsequent sale of vehicles, the fleet comprises Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-46 H30 (F298 RMH), Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D H38 (W15 HCT), Concept-bodied Mercedes-Benz 308D H39 (R893 WLG), Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s H40 (V58 KWO) and H41 (M534 NCG, *A13 XEL*).

Harte, Greenock

Further to the May issue, recently acquired Jonckheere Deauville-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YIL 4028 was previously registered *M833 ECS, 55 FS, M833 ECS, LNN 590, M740 KJU.*

Henderson, Hamilton

The last of the latest delivery of new Strathclyde Passenger Transport-liveried, B29F-seated Optare Solo M880s joined this fleet in April as 305 (YJ05 XOU). The next Solos due should arrive in September, numbered 155 and 255.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M761 GGE was withdrawn from service in March.

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L748 LWA was returned to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in April and similar P799 KSF was sold to Meffan, Kirriemuir in May. Leased Optare Solo 204 (MX04 VMH) was returned to Mistral (dealer), Knutsford in April.

Highland Heritage, Dalmally

Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Volvo B10M-62s R782/3 WSB were sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in March, 782 passing to Hunt, Alford in April. Other new owners for similar coaches include Yarranton, Eardiston (R779 WSB); Tyne Valley, Acomb (R780 WSB); and Star, Batley (R785 WSB). Neoplan Transliner C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA M902 OVR has been acquired by Highwayman, Errol.

Highwayman, Errol

As noted above, Neoplan Transliner C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA M902 OVR joined this fleet in March, ex-Highland Heritage, Dalmally.

Hutchison, Overtown

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s P503/4 VUS were acquired by Sharpe, Scarrington in March.

Jay, Greengairs

GSK 675, a C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340, was new in March and is in Leger Holidays livery.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 GSK 675 (*Y759 THS*) was given back its original registration upon sale to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in March.

Keir, Glass

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDA J721 KBC was re-registered J928 FPS before being sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston last October and passing subsequently to Stables, Newmill.

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

DG Comfort DelGro

FG FirstGroup

LB Lothian Buses

NX National Express Group

RN Rapsons

ST Stagecoach Group

YT Traction Group

Leask, Lerwick
The Thursday-only Lerwick-Burra shoppers' service was cancelled from the beginning of July.

Lianne, Renfrew
The proprietor of this firm is retiring and as a result the Paisley town centre-Hawkhead Estate service was cancelled from 20 June.

Lindsay, Lochboisdale
Former Ministry of Defence Wadham Stringer C41F-bodied Dennis Javelin 10SDA N320 RSK was acquired in February, but its previous identity is not known.

Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle
The five 13.75m, tri-axle Volvo B12Bs with Jonckheere Mistral 70 C57Ft coachwork due for this season arrived in March as FJ05 AOM-P/R. FJ05 AON/R are named *Loch Arklet* and *Loch Tay* respectively.

Lothian LB
Several Dennis Tridents were renumbered around the beginning of May, presumably to allow use of numbers 701 onwards for the forthcoming Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs. As a result, open-top examples 631-4 have become 31-4 again, 629/30 are 599, 600G, 656-61 are 634/29-33, and 701-6 are 656-61. Most noteworthy is that the new 599 and 600 are the first holders of these numbers since Metro-Cammell-bodied Leyland PD2/20s LWS 599, 600 of 1955/56. These numbers were left unused in the 1979 deliveries as they were intended for two (later cancelled) Leyland Titans, while more recently the Dennis Tridents delivered in 2000 finished at 598 with the 2001 deliveries beginning at 601.

Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TLs 291/5/6, converted to single-door layout earlier this year, are H45/30F ex-H45/26D.

Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart 172 was given the green and white Park-&-Ride harlequin livery in January, followed by 170/3 in March.

Lowe, Cuminestown
LDV M16-bodied LDV Convoy SY54 CYX was new last September. Other additions to the fleet which have not been recorded until now are Plaxton Beaver B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D L433 CPJ ex-Arriva Guildford & West Surrey in August 2003, and Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L122 DRN (*K122 XHG*) ex-Stagecoach North West 40422 last October.

L433 CPJ and Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G292 TSL were re-registered NUI 1581/2 respectively last August.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 RJI 8720 (*972 FGD, 383 DVF, STT 614X*) and similar DAF MB200 XAM 826A (*OTC 711Y, XAM 826A, OTC 711Y*) were sold in December.

MacEwan, Amisfield
It has been reported that this operator has purchased 10 of the Carlisle flood-damaged vehicles recently written off by Stagecoach, to be refurbished for use on school contracts. The first to appear in service was Alexander PS B49F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 K766 DAO, which entered service in May in the Peebles area.

McGill, Port Glasgow
SF05 HCX-Z, HDA are four of the new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts expected to enter service in April. Plaxton C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62s T517/20 EUB were acquired in March ex-National Holidays (Wallace Arnold).

McKindless, Wishaw
Plaxton Pointer B34F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDLs L151 WAG was added to the fleet in April ex-Arriva London DRL151.

Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 7195 BY (*K889 BRW*) was given back its original registration in March.

Recent additions to the fleet include Reeve Burgess B35F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL J122 HGF ex-Metrobus by March and former Arriva London MCW Metrobus DR101/17s B303 WUL, C406 BUV in May.

With the ending of the Lanark Ring'n'Ride demand-responsive transport contract with Strathclyde Passenger Transport on 16 July, all associated journeys on services 8 (Lanark-Lesmahagow), 9 (Lanark-Glespin) and 191 (Lanark-Biggar) were also due to cease by that date.

Above: K766 DAO, the Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M that MacEwan's has bought in the Stagecoach North West flood sale, in service in Biggar.
ALISTAIR TRAIN

MacLeod, Rogart
As reported in this month's News section, this operator is one of the first customers for the wheelchair accessible version of the Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario. An example, with DP29FL body, was ready for delivery in May.

Marbill, Beith
Three new Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R coaches are due for this fleet.

Marshall, Baillieston
Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 7617 SM (*K827 HUM*) was given back its original registration in March before being sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis. This allowed Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R790 WSB to become 7617 SM at that time.

Mason, Bo'ness
Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68C/1R GSC 646X had left the fleet by April.

MCT, Motherwell
Jonckheere Millennium Mistral-bodied Volvo B12Ms SN02 NGM (*LSK 832*) and SC02 JJZ (*2 HW, 12 HM, KSK 980*) were re-registered M1 MCT, P1 MCT respectively in March.

Meffan, Kirriemuir YT
Alexander (Belfast) B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D P799 KSF was acquired from Henderson, Hamilton in May.

Milne, New Byth
Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit LN52 LLK was acquired in March ex-Sixt Kenning (rental company).

Mitchell, Plean
Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SJ03 EHT was sold to Rowe, Muirkirk in May.

Morrison, Stirling
Onyx M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz 412D R185 LRF (*VFW 721, R185 LRF*) was acquired in January ex-Duckworth, Gisburn, and Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 611D N239 CNM passed to Reid, Rhynie in March.

Munro, Jedburgh
Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220 G931 MYG has been repainted into a slightly changed livery with an additional red stripe.

Orion, Wemyss Bay
Optare MetroRider T346 FWR has been given a blue skirt on its previously allover yellow livery.

Park, Hamilton
Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B12Ms HSK 651-3 were transferred to this fleet from Trathen, Plymouth in March.

New owners for sold Jonckheere Millennium Mistral-bodied Volvo B12Ms are Ellaway & Bjelobaba, Soulbury (SN02 NGP, *KSK 951* and SW02 VTT, *LSK 825*) and Lakeland, Hurst Green (PG02 YVZ, *LSK 831*).

Petrie, Forfar
Reeve Burgess B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds TIL 6045/7 (*J219/23 KTT*) were acquired in January ex-Brijan Tours, Bishops Waltham 45/7. Plaxton C35F-bodied Dennis Javelin 8.5SDL F739 WMS (*LSK 529, F739 WMS*) followed in March ex-First Aberdeen 20028.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 825 BGE (*F656 JJR*) was given back its original registration before being sold in March. Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L342 SUG (*XIL 6474, L342 SUG*) had been re-registered XIL 6471 by March, but the new registration for Concept-bodied Mercedes-Benz 410D XIL 6471 (*M98 EGE*) is not known.

PJ Travel, Clydebank
Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R S172 BFG had gone to Williams, Plympton by last November.

Prentice, Haddington
Recent acquisitions comprise Van Hool Alizée C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R913 YBA ex-Shearings 913 in February; C53Ft-seated Hestair Duple 425 TIL 3816 (*J82 CRR*) ex-Bailey, Kirkby in Ashfield in March; and Plaxton C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin T14 HCT ex-Harris, Tarbert also in March.

R913 YBA and T14 HCT were quickly re-registered B10 DPC and WSU 982 respectively, and the latter was re-seated to C70F in April. Other re-registrations to record are those of Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 YCX 320 to B868 RSH last August; Crest-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814L R132 KGD to YCX 320 last August; Crystals-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D N327 MHS (*C9 FLY, N327 MHS*) to N18 SCP by March; Mellor-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario WSU 982 (*S608 HGD*) to S608 HGD in March; and Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 B10 DPC (*G720 FSJ, YCR 874, G342 HSC*) to IIL 4595 in March.

B868 RSH passed to Snowden, Easington Colliery last August, and S608 HGD to Furey, Drumcliffe in March. Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K490 VVR (*B10 MDP, K490 VVR*) was sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in August and Plaxton-bodied Dennis R-series Y10 DPC passed to Bailey, Kirkby in Ashfield in March, but its registration is expected to return to this firm.

Prentice, West Calder
Berkhof Axial C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12M SN05 FDU was new in March.

Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 570 PRR

(*P685 DRS*) was given back its original registration in March before being sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough. Similar Jonckheere-bodied S573 KJF (*OUJ 969, S573 KJF*) was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis at that time.

Priest & Thomson, Baltasound

A new vehicle for the Shetland island of Unst is Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF05 BBE, delivered to this operator in April.

Rapsons Coaches RN

New Optare Solo 006 (YJ05 XOA) entered service in May from Inverness depot, and was used initially on the Nairn town service. It was anticipated, however, that it would be transferred to Orkney within a few weeks.

Recently acquired Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S764 SNF was originally registered *S6 JPT*.

Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart 196 has joined similar 197 at Fort William depot.

Further to the March issue, Plaxton Interurban-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDL 540 (L153 BFV) was previously Lancashire United 153, not ex-Centrebus, Leicester.

Plaxton Premiere 350-bodied Volvo B10M-62 658 (TRM 144, *T535 EUB*) had been given back its original registration by May, allowing similar 645 (V943 JST) to become TRM 144.

East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M-61 177 was badly damaged by fire in Fort William on 22 April.

Optare MetroRider 046 has been repainted into the blue and navy fleet livery in lieu of two-tone blue.

Former Peace, Kirkwall Plaxton-bodied Bedford VAS5 002 (AWJ 30T) had left the fleet by March.

Reid, Rhynie

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 611D N239 CNM was acquired in March ex-Morrison, Stirling.

Rennie, Dunfermline

New C35F-seated BMC Probus 850 coaches SN05 FCU/X were licensed in March. Other recent additions comprise former military Wadham Stringer Vanguard C70F-bodied Dennis Javelins K327 PHT (*75 KK 34*) last with Durbin, Patchway; K914 SUS (previous identity not yet known); and M933 ROS (*CX 47 AA*).

The three other former military Dennis Javelins acquired towards the end of last year had all been re-registered by May — N84 RGD (*EC 56 AA*) to NXX 451; N887 HSX (*EC 57 AA*) to BHZ 9542; and R710 TRV to BHZ 9548. Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 NXX 451 (*L641 AYS, HSK 652*) was re-registered L641 AYS before being sold last December.

Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R TPD 113X was sold in March and Bova Futura FHD12-340 GSU 343 (*L51 LTF, L5 BSL*) was acquired by Hussain, Walsall at that time.

Riddler, Arbroath

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R680 MWP was given Caledonian Travel livery in March.

Rowe, Muirkirk

May arrivals comprised Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SJ03 EHT ex-Mitchell, Plean and Jonckheere C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 RIL 2576 (*L746 YGE, 1 PSV, L942 LBV*) ex-DJ International, Barrhead.

Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B10M-62s VJI 9410/3 (*HSK 649/6, T718/5 UOS*) were sold to DJ International in April and May respectively, their registrations will probably be returned by DJ.

Scotbus, Inverness

Tendered service 398 (Inverness bus station-Inverewe Gardens via Contin and Achnasheen) was started on 30 May.

Scotguide, Glasgow

Further to last month's report, open-top MCW Metroliner C52 VJU entered service in red and cream Arriva Original London Sightseeing Tour colours.

MCW Metrobus GYE 587W was repainted in April from the allover red City Sightseeing livery into a new version of the cream and dark green Guide Friday livery with Glasgow Tour fleetnames for the revived Guide Friday tour. It was followed in May by A156 FPG, a Roe O43/29F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R, previously Edinburgh Tours 44.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 311Cdi SF05 AKK was new in April and Robin Hood-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D VJI 3001 (*F88 GGC*) has been sold to Brookside Travel, Penzance.

Simpson, Rosehearty

Berkhof Axial C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 W785 BCF was acquired in January ex-Group Travel, Stourbridge and Caetano C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12B FJ53 VDC followed in February ex-Reliant, Heather. The latter has been named *Flower of Scotland*.

Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391E.1.35 UAF 780 (*R507 SCH*) reverted to its original mark before being sold to Scania (dealer), Worksop in January. Berkhof-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YJL 693 (*P322 ARU*) was also given back its original registration before being sold to Caetano (dealer), Heather in February, allowing W785 BCF to become YJL 693.

Slaemuir, Port Glasgow

This operator had acquired Caetano Enigma-bodied Volvo B10M-62s Y797, 805 GDV by May and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L5 BUS (*WSV 551, M10 TGM*) had passed to Photoflash, Carluke by that time.

Spa, Strathpeffer

Mercedes-Benz 1836RL Y6 SPA was sold by April.

Stables, Newmill

Plaxton C55F-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDA J928 FPS (*J721 KBC*) was acquired last November ex-Keir, Glass.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

Further to previous reports, CH65/26Ft-seater Neoplan Skyliner 50128 (SV54 ELJ) did join this fleet in May after being used for driver training duties and by Stagecoach Wales for a few weeks.

Ex-Citybus, Hong Kong Alexander CH53/41F-bodied Leyland Olympians 13640 (*EF 6118*) and 13649 (H607 LNA, *ET 1023*) were transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Manchester in March. 13640 was then re-registered G283 YRJ, 13649 was re-seated to CH53/39Ft, and both were allocated to Aberdeen in allover blue Megabus.com livery.

Alexander Dash DP40F-bodied Volvo B6-50 30318 (M718 BCS) arrived from Stagecoach Western in May and has also been allocated to Aberdeen.

Leyland Olympians 14456/86/7, Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40136/8/67 and Volvo B10M-62 52667 had been repainted into current Stagecoach livery by April. Leyland Titan 10577 was repainted into allover yellow in March. Volvo B10M-61 52006 was in allover white by March, by which time Volvo B10M-60 was allover white with JW Coaches fleetnames. By April, Mercedes-Benz 709D had been repainted allover blue.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ON6LXCT/3RZs 14239/40 (WLT 727/94, *F201/2 FHH*) were given back their original registrations around February before being transferred to Stagecoach Manchester.

Jonckheere Modulo-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 51061/2 (YSV 730, VCS 391, *N561/2 SJF*) and similar Plaxton Premiere Interurban AC68Ft-bodied 51070 (WLT 720, *P670 LWB*) were transferred back to Stagecoach Western in March, having been displaced from Anglo-Scottish Megabus duties by the new Neoplan double-deck coaches.

Stagecoach Fife ST

Plaxton C44Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52308 (N618 USS) was transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Western in March and has been allocated to Cowdenbeath depot.

Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 20328/38 were given an overall blue and yellow advertisement for Carlton Bingo in March, and MAN 18.220HOCL 22253 was given an allover treatment for Crimestoppers in April.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52386 (FSU 739, *P626 NSE*) was transferred to Stagecoach Glasgow in March.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Vehicles transferred to this fleet in March comprised Plaxton Interurban C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 52261/3 (M161/3 CCD) from Stagecoach Western, and similar Expressliner C44Ft-bodied 52386 (FSU 739, *P626 NSE*) from Stagecoach Fife. 52386 had been given Motorvator livery by April.

This company no longer provides vehicles for Megabus.com operations. Megabus-liveried Leyland Olympian 14337 and Volvo Citybus 15247 had been returned to Magic Bus livery by April, although Citybus 15249 was still in Megabus garb at that time.

Stagecoach Western ST

Jonckheere Modulo AC70Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 51061/2 (YSV 730, VCS 391, *N561/2 SJF*) and similar Plaxton Premiere Interurban AC68Ft-bodied 51070 (WLT 720, *P670 LWB*) were transferred back to this fleet from Stagecoach Bluebird in March. All three were returned in Megabus blue and 51061/70 entered service in that livery from Ardrossan and Cumnock depots respectively.

A new livery of yellow with blue skirt has been adopted this year for Arran tour buses, open-top Leyland Titan 11083 and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52262 having been given this treatment in time for the Easter holiday weekend. Allover blue Magic Bus-liveried Volvo B10M-50s 20424/5 (J24/5 MCW) and Volvo B10M-55s 20715/8 (K715/8 DAO) were repainted into current standard Stagecoach colours in April. Volvo B10M-62 52359 had also been given that livery by April, as have Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40053/192 ex-allover blue Magic Mini.

Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 52261/3 (M161/3 CCD) moved to Stagecoach Glasgow in March; similar 52308 (N618 USS) was transferred to Stagecoach Fife at that time; and Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 30318 (M718 BCS) was transferred to Stagecoach Bluebird in May.

Stepend, Glenmavis

New service 10 (Newarthill-Wishaw Hospital via Carfin and Motherwell) was due to start on 30 June, adding to competition with various other operators on the Newarthill-Motherwell and Motherwell-Wishaw corridors.

continued overleaf...

Below: The first two open-toppers to carry Scotguide's new Guide Friday identity are MCW Metrobus GYE 587W and Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian A156 FPG. The Metrobus was originally London Transport M587, the Olympian London Country LR56. PHIL HALEWOOD

Strathtay YT

Further to the March issue, East Lancs-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R 416 (WLT 743, *VSS 4X*) was given back its original registration before it was sold last December.

Sweeney, Muthill

Weekday service 21 (Auchterarder-Gleneagles Station) has been cancelled from 2 July.

Telford, Newcastleton

Plaxton C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YN03 WYL was acquired in March ex-Logan, Dunloy.

Thomson, Glasgow

One-time Guernsey B25F-seated Optare MetroRider MR03 J968 BNL (*19675, J968 BNL*) was purchased from Wilson, Gourock in March.

Weir, Clydebank

Caetano Algarve-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P682 DRS and similar Van Hool Alizée-bodied M6 BUS are numbered WT005/6 respectively.

West Coast, Campbeltown

New Wright Cadet-bodied VDL SB120s YJ05 PVK, PWU had entered service in fleet livery at Dunoon and Rothesay respectively by early May.

White, Cumnock

Ronnie White, trading as Swift Minibuses, is licensed to operate up to 24 vehicles and most have been LDV or Mercedes-Benz minibuses. A recent acquisition, however, is B27F-seated Marshall Minibus P10 ASM, new to Shetland operator Morrison, Whiteness in 1996 and later Rapsons Coaches 203.

Above: YJ05 PWU, one of the latest delivery of Wright Cadet-bodied VADL SB120s for West Coast Motors, operating the Mount Stuart-Rothesay Pier shuttle on the Isle of Bute. DANIEL STAZICKER

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLE V293 UVY entered service with this operator in May, still in the livery of Reliance, Sutton-on-Forest.

Whyte, Newmachar

Van Hool Alizée T9 C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12B SN05 FLP was new in April.

Wilson, Gourock

One-time Guernsey Optare MetroRider MR03 J968 BNL (*19675, J968 BNL*) was sold to Thomson, Glasgow in March.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET: McColl's Coaches

BASED: Ballagan Garage, Balloch, West Dunbartonshire

FOUNDED: Liam McColl, who trained as a fitter and welder and worked initially for a heavy goods vehicle firm, moved into buses as a part-time driver with Duncan Stewart Coaches of Dalmuir. Redundancy from his full-time job in 1984 forced his hand to obtain a psv operator licence the next year, his first bus being an elderly Ford Transit, which he used for bingo runs and club outings. He later became one of four partners running the Duncan Stewart business, but ended up acquiring that licence. The former Barrie, Balloch garage eventually replaced Dalmuir, and in 2004 new premises were added at Dalquhurn Industrial Estate, Renton.

McColl's latest livery on B858 AOP, a former Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus, outside Glasgow Central station, while operating a rail replacement service. PHIL HALEWOOD

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?: Started local bus services after deregulation, using secondhand Leyland Nationals, but sold this part of the business to Kelvin Central Buses in 1992. The Alexandria-Luss subsidised service was started in 1995 and commercial services started again in 1996 in Dumbarton and Helensburgh. These have developed into a network linking the Vale of Leven and Clydebank, and further tendered services are operated from Balloch to Helensburgh, Luss and Balmaha. Since the 1980s, an extensive school contract and private hire business has also been built up, and tours were first operated in 1997.

LIVERY: Various styles in the past, including an orange and beige scheme based on the well-known Graham's of Paisley colours. Recently, however, a highly distinctive multi-coloured livery has been designed by Liam's son and adopted for the fleet — and has been applied to buses in the John Boyce Coaches fleet, which also operates on the Clydebank-Dumbarton corridor.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?: About 40 buses and coaches, including 25 former Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobuses. Several operator licences are currently held which, together, allow for the operation of around 35 vehicles.

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?: A huge variety of vehicle types has been used over the years, the more unusual ones having included a Unicar-bodied Volvo B58 coach, MCW Metroliner double-deck coaches, the unique ex-Northern Scottish Alexander Y-bodied Dennis Lancet SD511, and an Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLE.

Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue, Belfast, BT6 9RG.

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin,
or by e-mail to: **ntpa@eircom.net.**

MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The four Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo touring coaches are rear-engined B12Bs. They were completed in May and have the first Plaxton bodies built with power-operated side-lockers.

Partial open-top Leyland Atlantean/ECW 2901 (PXI 5501, *JYG 417V*) has been transferred from Metro reserve to Coleraine, to operate summer seasonal service 177 along the spectacular coastal route between Coleraine and the Giant's Causeway.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 856 (NXI 6856) has been withdrawn following engine failure, while Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 2615 (NXI 4615) has returned to Metro reserve after a period on loan to Lisburn.

Ten buses were maliciously damaged in Ballymena bus depot. Most had broken windows or headlights, but three suffered more substantial bodywork damage, including Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1223 (NXI 1223), which was started and driven against the bus station stands. All are repairable and the depot managed to turn out a full service the following morning.

Sold for scrapping by Beattie (dealer), Hillsborough are Leyland Leopard/Alexander 140 (VCZ 9398, *ROI 140*), 161/2 (UOI 161/2), 176/85/93 (VOI 176/85/93) and 195 (UCZ 5421, *VOI 195*), and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 824/39 (NXI 6824/39).

Metro

In connection with the operation of real-time information at bus stops, Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2807-11 (CCZ 8807-11) have been transferred from Great Victoria Street to Short Strand depot in exchange for similar 2762-4, 2805/6 (BCZ 2762 etc). Following the withdrawal of the Centrelink service in February, the real-time equipment set up for that route has been transferred to the Belfast City Airport shuttle service, which Flexibus operates.

More Bristol RELL6G/Alexander sold to Lough Swilly are 2514/7/25/30 (XOI 2514 etc) and 2538/43/59 (AXI 2538 etc).

Metro-liveried Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultras 2730/40 (LAZ 2730/40) are the first of their type fitted with Skybreaker advertising panels.

Above: Dublin Bus — and CIÉ before it — have long been noted for their striking overall advertising buses. Current examples include Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Volvo Olympian RV328 (97 D 328), which publicises the Today FM radio station. PHIL HALEWOOD

Below: Although many operators find halfcab double-deckers impractical for open-top tours, Dualway has converted former London United Routemaster RML2729 to partial open-top for City Sightseeing work in Dublin. DARREN HALL

Dublin Bus

Delivery of the next 50 new AV-class Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TLs was imminent in late-May. These will displace 50 1991/92 Leyland Olympians. Most of the initial batch for Conyngham Road will be allocated to route 79, to convert it to low-floor operation, with the first three due in week commencing 30 May. The 20 new tri-axle Alexander Dennis Enviro500-bodied Volvo B9TLs are expected in October.

Another Ringsend route group (the 65/B) has been converted to new generation Wayfarer ticket machines. Summerhill-operated route 41A has been re-routed within Swords to follow a clockwise circle serving the River Valley housing estate.

Two Volvo Olympians in overall advertising liveries for Heinz Tomato Ketchup and Beanz are Phibsboro-based RV350 and Donnybrook-based RV413. The Beanz advert is on the nearside and rear of RV350 and the offside and front of RV413. Leyland Olympian RH81 (91 D 1081) was withdrawn in mid-May, after being partly deroofed in a collision with the raised bucket of an excavator.

Bus Éireann

In one of the worst-ever road accidents involving the Clé group, DAF MB230LT/Van Hool Alizée schoolbus DVH17 (93 D 20069) overturned on 23 May while swerving to avoid two crashed cars. Five teenage girls on the coach were killed and several others were severely injured. The full facts are being investigated by Garda (police), Bus éireann and the Health n& Safety Authority.

New Scania/Irizar PB coaches in service by late-May were SP5, 7, 12/4/7, 20-3/5-30. Some Stranorlar-based examples have prominent route branding — e.g. SP30 for service 30 (Donegal Town-Dublin via Cavan).

A new Naas-Newbridge local service has begun recently, initially using minibuses ML108/10 loaned from Navan town services. However, to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies, ex-Go-North East Optare Excel OP1, 9 (97 D 67771/3) have been branded for the route. Both are based near Newbridge, but are controlled from Broadstone.

Other Excel allocations confirmed are of OP10/5 at Ballina, OP11/4 at Limerick and OP12/3 at Dundalk, displacing DAF SB220/Alexander Setantas AD15/7 to Cork.

Further to May Fleet News, DAF MB230LT/Plaxton Paramount PD32 (91 D 10032) was withdrawn three years ago following extensive engine fire damage at Cork. Confirmed withdrawals are of Ballina-based Van Hool Acron T815H EVS2 (SI 3002), Limerick-based GAC Rural Bus KS5 (EZV 5) — it has since gone to Stranorlar to provide spares — Waterford-based KS121 (PZV 121) and, most surprisingly, Cavan-based DAF SB220/Plaxton Verde P10 (93 D 3010), following extensive fire damage several months ago.

OTHER OPERATORS

Dualway (McConn), Rathcoole

Initial use of former London United AEC Routemasters on open-top City Sightseeing tours was anticipated for late-May/early-June. Former RML2729 carries Irish vintage registration ZV 7699.

Lough Swilly

A further batch of ex-Citybus Alexander-bodied Bristol RELL6Gs from Metro for use as school contract buses in Co. Donegal comprises 463/5/6 (XOI 2525, AXI 2559, XOI 2517), XOI 2514/30 and AXI 2538/43. Similar BXI 2592/5, AXI 2535/54 are numbered 461/2/4/7. While most have been painted either yellow/white or red/yellow/white, 459 (AXI 2539) is entering service in Citybus red/ivory. All are reseated from B45F to B51F, while ex-Citybus Leyland Tiger 460 (NXI 4626) is B49F, ex-B42F.

Leyland Leopard/Alexander Y-types withdrawn are 375/93 (78 DL 650, *TSJ 56S*; 77 DL 586, *WCW 314R*).

Malahide Coaches, Dublin

05 D 45659 is a new Scania/Irizar PB recently acquired.

Left: One of the new Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12Bs for Ulsterbus Tours nearing completion at Plaxton's Scarborough factory in May. ALAN MILLAR

BUSES CLASSIFIEDS

Copy deadline for August issue — 24 June 2005, on sale 15 July 2005

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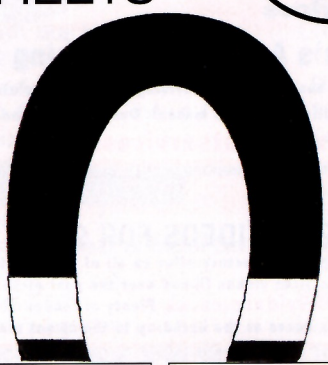

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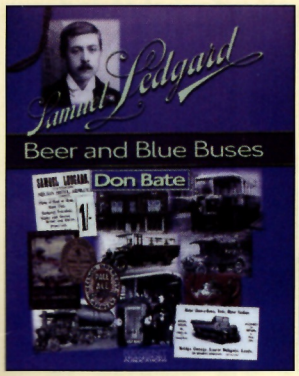

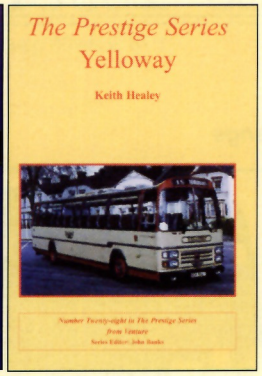

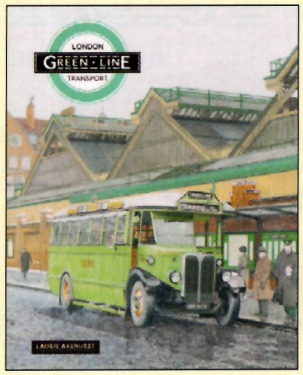

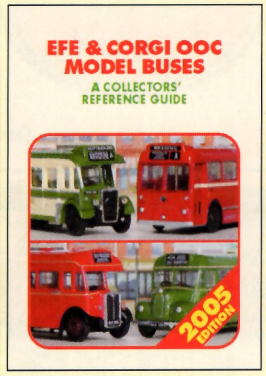

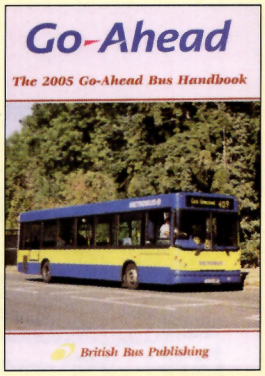

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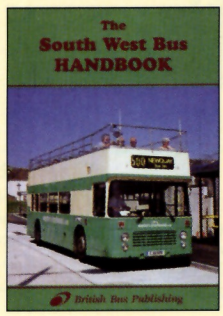

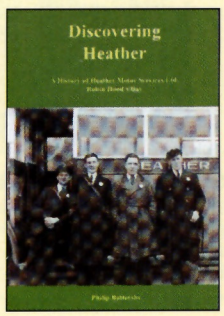

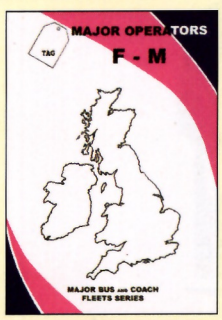

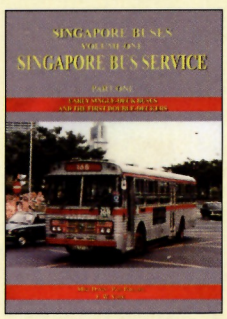

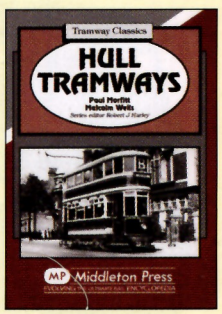

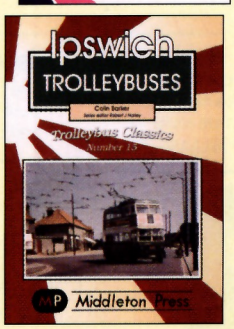

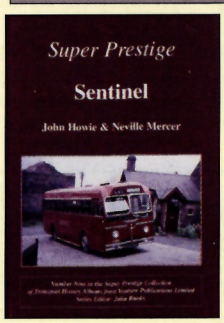

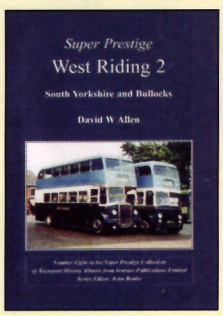

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99204 AEC STL Bus LONDON TRANSPORT

The STL class bus was London's workhorse during the war, illustrated by STL 1988, registration number CGX 49 on the long route 19 from north to south London (Clapham Junction) taking it each day through the devastation of the previous night's bombing. JUNE RELEASE ☐

99205 Guy Arab II Utility SOUTHDOWN

Operating services along the south-east coast, Southdown buses were particularly vulnerable to damage from bombers and marauding fighter aircraft, so the livery was camouflaged to hide them. This Guy Arab II Utility registered GUF 120, fleet number 420 works route 12 to Newhaven, Seaford and Eastbourne. JUNE RELEASE ☐

99206 Daimler Utility BIRMINGHAM CITY TRANSPORT

The sustained destruction of buses in Birmingham caused some of the replacement Utility buses entering service to be painted military grey with visibility white markings. Our Daimler registered FOP 339; fleet number 1339 operates the Outer circle route 11. JUNE RELEASE ☐

99207 Leyland TD 1 Closed Rear PLYMOUTH CITY TRANSPORT

The heavy bombing of the dockyards destroyed most of Plymouth's buses and old buses like this Leyland registered DR 7405, fleet number 124 were made serviceable and brought back into use, on route to the Theatre. JUNE RELEASE ☐

30503 Guy GS Special LONDON TRANSPORT

The second general release of our new casting sees our Guy GS, fleet number GS 62, registration number MXX 362 taking the circular route to Pratts Bottom. JUNE RELEASE ☐

12307 Harrington Grenadier NORTH WESTERN

The last Harrington Grenadier that we released was in 1993, 12 years ago so this North Western will be a welcome addition to our range. Registered AJA 151B, fleet number 151 is working route X4 to Aberystwyth. JUNE RELEASE ☐

15002 Leyland National Mk I Long BRIGHTON & HOVE

Seen in the traditional Brighton Hove & District style livery to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Our Leyland National registered UFG 51S, fleet number 51, working route 36A to Brighton Old Steine, interestingly carries its green colours beneath the legal lettering, a reminder of past times in its history. JUNE RELEASE ☐

24904 Mercedes Minibus SOUTH WALES TRANSPORT

For our collectors of Welsh liveried buses, this Mercedes Minibus of South Wales Transport looks very attractive indeed. Registration number F320 AWN, fleet number 320 is operating route 6 to Port Tennant near Swansea. MAY RELEASE ☐

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